VISIT…

RED RIDING HOOD
From the picture by G. F. Watts, in the Birmingham Art Gallery

THE BOOK OF ART

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

BY

AGNES ETHEL CONWAY

AND

SIR MARTIN CONWAY

WITH SIXTEEN FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS
IN COLOUR

A. & C. BLACK, LTD.
4, 5 & 6 SOHO SQUARE, LONDON, W.1

First published September 1909 as "The Children's Book of Art"
Reprinted in 1914, 1927, and 1935

Made in Great Britain.
Printed by R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, Edinburgh.

TO
MY LITTLE FRIENDS

AGNES AND ROSANNE

NOTE

My thanks are due and are cordially rendered to the Earl of Yarborough, Sir Frederick Cook, and the authorities of Trinity College, Cambridge, for permission to reproduce their pictures; to Lady Alfred Douglas and Mr. Henry Newbolt for leave to quote from their poems; to Mr. Everard Green, Somerset Herald, for all that is new in the interpretation of the Wilton diptych; to Miss K. K. Radford for the translation in Chapter VIII., and to all the friends who have helped me with criticism and suggestions.

A. E. C.

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THE CHILDREN'S BOOK OF ART

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

Almost the pleasantest thing in the world is to be told a splendid story by a really nice person. There is not the least occasion for the story to be true; indeed I think the untrue stories are the best—those in which we meet delightful beasts and things that talk twenty times better than most human beings ever do, and where extraordinary events happen in the kind of places that are not at all like our world of every day. It is so fine to be taken into a country where it is always summer, and the birds are always singing and the flowers always blowing, and where people get what they want by just wishing for it, and are not told that this or that isn't good for them, and that they'll know better than to want it when they're grown up, and all that kind of thing which is so annoying and so often happening in this obstinate criss-cross world, where the days come and go in such an ordinary fashion.

But if I might choose the person to tell me the kind of story I like to listen to, and hear told to me over and over again, it would be some one who could draw pictures for me while talking—pictures like those of Tenniel in *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. How much better we know Alice herself and the White Knight and the Mad Hatter and all the rest of them from the pictures than even from the story itself. But my story-teller should not only draw the pictures while he talked, but he should paint them too. I want to see the sky blue and the grass green, and I want red cloaks and blue bonnets and pink cheeks and all the bright colours, and some gold and silver too, and not merely black and white—though black and white drawings would be better than nothing, so long as they showed me what the people and beasts and dragons and things were like. I could put up with even rather bad drawings if only they were vivid. Don't you know how good a bad drawing sometimes seems? I have a friend who can make the loveliest folks and the funniest beasts and the quaintest houses and trees, and he really can't draw a bit; and the curious thing

is, that if he could draw better I should not like his folks and beasts half as much as I do the lop-sided, crook-legged, crazy-looking people he produces. And then he has such quaint things to tell about them, and while he talks he seems to make them live, so that I can hardly believe they are not real people for all their unlikeness to any one you ever saw.

Now, the old pictures you see in the picture galleries are just like that, only the people that painted them didn't invent the stories but merely illustrated stories which, at the time those painters lived, every one knew. Some of the stories were true and some were just a kind of fairy tale, and it didn't matter to the painters, and it doesn't matter to us, which was true and which wasn't. The only thing that matters is whether the story is a good one and whether the picture is a nice one. There is a delightful old picture painted on a wall away off at Assisi, in Italy, which shows St. Francis preaching to a lot of birds, and the birds are all listening to him and looking pleased—the way birds do look pleased when they find a good fat worm or fresh crumbs. Now, St. Francis was a real man and such a dear person too, but I don't suppose half the stories told about him were really true, yet we can pretend they were and that's just what the painter helps us to do. Don't you know all the games that begin with 'Let's pretend'?—well, that's art. Art is pretending, or most of it is. Pictures take us into a world of make-believe, a world of imagination, where everything is or should be in the right place and in the right light and of the right colour, where all the people are nicely dressed to match one another, and are not standing in one another's way, and not interrupting one another or forgetting to help play the game. That's the difference between pictures and photographs. A photograph is almost always wrong somewhere. Something is out of place, or something is there which ought to be away, or the light is wrong; or, if it's coloured, the colours are just not in keeping with one another. If it's a landscape the trees are where we don't want them; they hide what we want to see, or they don't hide the very thing we want hidden. Then the clouds are in the wrong place, and a wind ruffles the water just where we want to see something reflected. That's the way things actually happen in the real world. But in the world of 'Let's pretend,' in the world of art, they don't happen so. There everything happens right, and everybody does, not so much what they should (that might sometimes be dull), but exactly what we want them to do—which is so very much better. That is the world of your art and my art. Unfortunately all the pictures in the galleries weren't painted just for you and me; but you'll find, if you look for them, plenty that were, and the rest don't matter. Those were painted, no doubt, for some one else. But if you could find the some one else for whom they were painted, the some one else whose world of 'Let's pretend' was just these pictures that don't belong to your world, and if they could tell you about their world of 'Let's pretend,' ten to one you'd find it just as good a world as your own, and you'd soon learn to 'pretend' that way too.

Well, the purpose of this book is to take you into a number of worlds of 'Let's pretend,' most of which I daresay will be new to you, and perhaps you will find some

of them quite delightful places. I'm sure you can't help liking St. Jerome's Cell when you come to it. It's not a bit like any room we can find anywhere in the world to-day, but wouldn't it be joyful if we could? What a good time we could have there with the tame lion (not a bit like any lion in the Zoo, but none the worse for that) and the jolly bird, and all St. Jerome's little things. I should like to climb on to his platform and sit in his chair and turn over his books, though I don't believe they'd be interesting to read, but they'd certainly be pretty to look at. If you and I were there, though, we should soon be out away behind, looking round the corner, and finding all sorts of odd places that unfortunately can't all get into the picture, only we know they're there, down yonder corridor, and from what the painter shows us we can invent the rest for ourselves.

One of the troubles of a painter is that he can't paint every detail of things as they are in nature. A primrose, when you first see it, is just a little yellow spot. When you hold it in your hand you find it made up of petals round a tiny centre with little things in it. If you take a magnifying glass you can see all its details multiplied. If you put a tiny bit of it under a microscope, ten thousand more little details come out, and so it might go on as long as you went on magnifying. Now a picture can't be like that. It just has to show you the general look of things as you see them from an ordinary distance. But there comes in another kind of trouble. How do you see things? We don't all see the same things in the same way. Your mother's face looks very different to you from its look to a mere person passing in the street. Your own room has a totally different aspect to you from what it bears to a casual visitor. The things you specially love have a way of standing out and seeming prominent to you, but not, of course, to any one else. Then there are other differences in the look of the same things to different people which you have perhaps noticed. Some people are more sensitive to colours than others. Some are much more sensitive to brightness and shadow. Some will notice one kind of object in a view, or some detail in a face far more emphatically than others. Girls are quicker to take note of the colour of eyes, hair, skin, clothes, and so forth than boys. A woman who merely sees another woman for a moment will be able to describe her and her dress far more accurately than a man. A man will be noticing other things. His picture, if he painted one, would make those other things prominent.

So it is with everything that we see. None of us sees more than certain features in what the eye rests upon, and if we are artists it is only those features that we should paint. We can't possibly paint every detail of everything that comes into the picture. We must make a choice, and of course we choose the features and details that please us best. Now, the purpose of painting anything at all is to paint the beauty of the thing. If you see something that strikes you as ugly, you don't instinctively want to paint it; but when you see an effect of beauty, you feel that it would be very nice indeed to have a picture showing that beauty. So a picture is not really the representation of a thing, but the representation of the beauty of the thing.

Some people can see beauty almost everywhere; they are conscious of beauty all day long. They want to surround themselves with beauty, to make all their acts beautiful, to shed beauty all about them. Those are the really artistic souls. The gift of such perfect instinct for beauty comes by nature to a few. It can be cultivated by almost all. That cultivation of all sorts of beauty in life is what many people call civilization—the real art of living. To see beauty everywhere in nature is not so very difficult. It is all about us where the work of uncivilized man has not come in to destroy it. Artists are people who by nature and by education have acquired the power to see beauty in what they look at, and then to set it down on paper or canvas, or in some other material, so that other people can see it too.

It seems strange that at one time the beauty of natural landscape was hardly perceived by any one at all. People lived in the beautiful country and scarcely knew that it was beautiful. Then came the time when the beauty of landscape began to be felt by the nicest people. They began to put it into their poetry, and to talk and write about it, and to display it in landscape pictures. It was through poems and pictures, which they read and saw, that the general run of folks first learned to look for beauty in nature. I have no doubt that Turner's wonderful sunsets made plenty of people look at sunsets and rejoice in the intricacy and splendour of their glory for the first time in their lives. Well, what Turner and other painters of his generation did for landscape, had had to be done for men and women in earlier days by earlier generations of artists. The Greeks were the first, in their sculpture, to show the wonderful beauty of the human form; till their day people had not recognised what to us now seems obvious. No doubt they had thought one person pretty and another handsome, but they had not known that the human figure was essentially a glorious thing till the Greek sculptors showed them. Another thing painters have taught the world is the beauty of atmosphere. Formerly no one seems to have noticed how atmosphere affects every object that is seen through it. The painters had to show us that it is so. After we had seen the effect of atmosphere in pictures we began to be able to see for ourselves in nature, and thus a whole group of new pleasures in views of nature was opened up to us.

Away back in the Middle Ages, six hundred and more years ago, folks had far less educated eyes than we possess to-day. They looked at nature more simply than we do and saw less in it. So they were satisfied with pictures that omitted a great many features we cannot do without.

But painting does not only concern itself with representing the world we actually see and the people that our eyes actually behold. It concerns itself quite as much with the world of fancy, of make-believe. Indeed, most painters when they look at an actual scene let their fancy play about it, so that presently what they see and what they fancy get mixed up together, and their pictures are a mixture of fancy and of fact, and no one can tell where the one ends and the other begins. The fancies of people are very different at different times, and you can't understand the pictures of

old days unless you can share the fancies of the old painters. To do that you must know something about the way they lived and the things they believed, and what they hoped for and what they were afraid of.

Here, for instance, is a very funny fact solemnly recorded in an old account book. A certain Count of Savoy owned the beautiful Castle of Chillon, which you have perhaps seen, on the shores of the Lake of Geneva. But he could not be happy, because he and the people about him thought that in a hole in the rock under one of the cellars a basilisk lived—a very terrible dragon—and they all went in fear of it. So the Count paid a brave mason a large sum of money (and the payment is solemnly set down in his account book) to break a way into this hole and turn the basilisk out; and I have no doubt that he and his people were greatly pleased when the hole was made and no basilisk was found. Folks who believed in dragons as sincerely as that, must have gone in terror in many places where we should go with no particular emotion. A picture of a dragon to them would mean much more than it would to us. So if we are really to understand old pictures, we must begin by understanding the fancies of the artists who painted them, and of the people they were painted for. You see how much study that means for any one who wants to understand all the art of all the world.

We shall not pretend to lead you on any such great quest as that, but ask you to look at just a few old pictures that have been found charming by a great many people of several generations, and to try and see whether they do not charm you as well. You must never, of course, pretend to like what you don't like—that is too silly. We can't all like the same things. Still there are certain pictures that most nice people like. A few of these we have selected to be reproduced in this book for you to look at. And to help you realize who painted them and the kind of people they were painted for, my daughter has written the chapters that follow. I hope you will find them entertaining, and still more that you will like the pictures, and so learn to enjoy the many others that have come down to us from the past, and are among the world's most precious possessions to-day.

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CHAPTER II

THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY IN EUROPE

Before we give our whole attention to the first picture, of which the original was painted in England in 1377, let us imagine ourselves in the year 1200 making a rapid tour through the chief countries of Europe to see for ourselves how the people lived. The first thing that will strike us on our journey is the contrast between the grandeur of the churches and public buildings and the insignificance of most of the houses. Some of the finest churches in England, built in the style of architecture called 'Norman,' one or more of which you may have seen, date before the year 1200, as for example, Durham Cathedral, and the naves of Norwich, Ely, and Peterborough Cathedrals. The great churches abroad were also beautiful and more elaborately decorated, in the North with sculpture and painting, in the South with marble and mosaic. The towns competed one with another in erecting them finer and larger, and in decorating them as magnificently as they could. This was done because the church was a place which the people used for many other purposes besides Sunday services. In the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, the parish church, on week-days as well as on Sundays, was a very useful and agreeable place to most of the parishioners. The 'holy' days, or saints' days, 'holidays' indeed, were times of rejoicing and festivity, and the Church processions and services were pleasant events in the lives of many who had few entertainments, and who for the most part could neither read nor write. Printing was not yet invented, at least not in Europe, and as every book had to be written out by hand, copies of books were rare and only owned by the few who could read them, so that stories were mostly handed down by word of mouth, the same being told by mother to child for many generations.

The favourites were stories of the saints and martyrs of the Catholic Church, for of course we are speaking now of times long before the Reformation. The Old Testament stories and all the stories of the life of Christ and His Apostles were well known too, and just as we never tire of reading our favourite books over and over again, our forefathers of 1200 wanted to see on the walls of their churches representations of the stories which they could not read. Their daily thoughts were more occupied with the Infant Christ, the saints, and the angels, than ours generally are. They thought of themselves as under the protection of some saint, who would plead with God the

Father for them if they asked him, for God Himself seemed too high or remote to be appealed to always directly. He was approached with awe; the saints, the Virgin, and the Infant Christ, with love.

We must realise this difference before we can well understand a picture painted in the twelfth, thirteenth, or fourteenth centuries, nor can we look at one without feeling that the artist and the people for whom he painted, so loved the holy personages. They thought about them always, not only at stated times and on Sundays, and never tired of looking at pictures of them and their doings. It is sometimes said that only Catholics can understand medieval art, because they feel towards the saints as the old painters did. But it is possible for any one to realize how in those far-off days the people felt, and it is this that we must try to do. The religious fervour of the Middle Ages was not a sign of great virtue among all the people. Some were far more cruel, savage, and unrestrained than we are to-day. Very wicked men even became powerful dignitaries in the Church. But it was the Church that fostered the impulses of pity and charity in a fierce age, and some of the saints of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, such as St. Francis of Assisi and St. Catharine of Siena, are still held to be among the most beautiful characters the world has ever known.

The churches of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Florence were lined with marble, and a great picture frequently stood above the altar. It is difficult to realize to-day that the processes which we call oil and water-colour painting were not then invented, and that no shops existed to sell canvases and paints ready for use. The artist painted upon a wooden panel, which he had himself to make, plane flat, and cut to the size he needed. In order to get a surface upon which he could paint, he covered the panel with a thin coating of plaster which it was difficult to lay on absolutely flat. Upon the plaster he drew the outline of the figures he was going to paint, and filled in the background with a thin layer of gold leaf, such as is to-day used for gilding frames. After the background had been put in, it was impossible to correct the outline of the figures, and the labour of preparing the wooden panel and of laying the gold was so great that an artist would naturally not make risky attempts towards something new, lest he should spoil his work. In the Jerusalem Chamber of Westminster Abbey there is a thirteenth-century altar-piece of this kind, and you can see the strips of vellum that were used to cover the joins of the different pieces of wood forming the panel, beneath the layer of plaster, which has now to a great extent peeled off.

The people liked to see their Old Testament stories and the stories from the Life of Christ painted over and over again. They had become fond of the versions of the tales which they had known and seen painted when they were young, and did not wish them changed, so that the range of subjects was not large. The same were repeated, and because of the painter's fear of making mistakes it was natural that the same figures should be repeated too. Thus, whatever the subject pictured, a tradition was

formed in each locality for the grouping and general arrangement of the figures, and the most authoritative tradition for such typical groupings was preserved in Constantinople or Byzantium, from which city the 'Byzantine' school of painting takes its name.

Before 1200, Byzantium had been a centre of residence and the civilizing influence of trade for eighteen centuries. It had been the capital of the Roman Empire, and less civilized peoples from the north had never conquered the town, destroying the Greek and Roman traditions, as happened elsewhere in Europe. You have read how the Romans had to withdraw their armies from England to defend Rome against the attacks of the Goths from the north, and then how Britain was settled by Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Danes, who destroyed most of the Roman civilization. A similar though much less complete destruction took place in Italy a little later, when Goths and Lombards, who were remotely akin to the Angles and Saxons, overwhelmed Roman culture. But next to Constantinople, Rome had the best continuous tradition of art, for the fine monuments of the great imperial days still existed in the city. In Byzantium the original Greek population struggled on, and continued to paint, and make mosaics, and erect fine buildings, till the Turks conquered them in 1453. The Byzantines were wealthy and made exquisite objects in gold, precious stones, and ivory. While they were painting better than any other people in Europe, they too reproduced the same subjects and the same figures over and over again, only the figures were more graceful than those of the local Italian, English, and French artists, who in varying degrees at different times tried to paint like the Byzantine or Greek artists, but without quite the same success. So long as there was no need for an artist to paint anything but the old well-established subjects, and so long as people desired them to be painted in the old conventional manner, there was little reason why any painter should try to be original and paint what was not wanted. But in the thirteenth century a great change took place.

Let us here refresh our memories of what we may have read of that delightful saint, Francis of Assisi. He was born in 1182, the son of a well-to-do nobleman, in the little town of Assisi in Umbria, and as a lad became inflamed with the ideal of the religious life. But instead of entering one of the existing monastic orders, where he would have been protected, he gave away every possession he had in the world and adopted 'poverty' as his watchword. Clad in an old brown habit, he walked from place to place preaching charity, obedience, and renunciation of all worldly goods. He lived on what was given to him to eat from day to day; he nursed the lepers and the sick. Ever described as a most lovable person, he won by his preaching the hearts of people of all classes, from the King of France to the humblest peasant. He wrote beautiful hymns in praise of the sun, the moon, and the stars, and had a great love for every living thing. The birds were said to have flocked around him because they loved him, and we read that he talked to them and called them his 'little sisters.' An old writer tells this story in good faith:

> When St. Francis spake words to them, the birds began all of them to open their beaks and spread their wings and reverently bend their heads down to the ground, and by their acts and by their songs did show that the holy Father gave them joy exceeding great.

Wherever he preached he made converts who 'married Holy Poverty,' as St. Francis expressed it, gave up everything they had, and lived his preaching and roaming life. St. Francis himself had no idea of forming a monastic order. He wished to live a holy life in the world and show others how to do the same, and for years he and his companions worked among the poor, earning their daily bread when they could, and when they could not, begging for it. Gradually, however, ambition stirred in the hearts of some of the followers of Francis, and against the will of their leader they made themselves into the Order of Franciscan Friars, collected gifts of money, and began to build churches and monastic buildings. At first the buildings were said to belong to the Pope, who allowed the Franciscans to use them, since they might not own property; but after the death of St. Francis, the Order built churches throughout the length and breadth of Italy, not of marble and mosaic but of brick, since brick was cheaper; but the brick walls were plastered, and upon the wet plaster there were painted scenes from the life of St. Francis, side by side with the old Christian and saintly legends. This sudden demand for painted churches with paintings of new subjects, stirred the painters of the day to alter their old style. When an artist was asked to paint a large picture of St. Francis preaching to the birds, he had to look at real birds and he had to study a real man in the attitude of preaching. There was no scene that had ever been painted from the life of Christ or of any saint in which a man preached to a bird, so that the artist was driven to paint from nature instead of copying former pictures.

Let us now read what a painter who lived in the sixteenth century, Vasari by name, wrote about the rise of painting in his native city. Some learned people nowadays say that Vasari was wrong in many of the stories he told, but after all he lived much nearer than we do to the times he wrote about, and it is safer to believe what he tells us than what modern students surmise, except when they are able to cite other old authorities to which Vasari did not have access.

> The endless flood of misfortunes which overwhelmed unhappy Italy not only ruined everything worthy of the name of a building, but completely extinguished the race of artists, a far more serious matter. Then, as it pleased God, there was born in the year 1240, in the city of Florence, Giovanni, surnamed Cimabue, to shed the first light on the art of painting. Instead of paying attention to his lessons, Cimabue spent the whole day drawing men, horses, houses, and various other fancies on his books and odd sheets, like one who felt himself compelled to do so by nature. Fortune proved favourable to his natural inclination, for some Greek artists were summoned to Florence by the government of

> the city for no other purpose than the revival of painting in their midst, since the art was not so much debased as altogether lost. In this way Cimabue made a beginning in the art which attracted him, for he often played the truant and spent the whole day in watching the masters work. Thus it came about that his father and the artists considered him so fitted to be a painter that if he devoted himself to the profession he might look for honourable success in it, and to his great satisfaction his father procured him employment with the painters. Thus by dint of continual practice and with the assistance of his natural talent he far surpassed the manner of his teachers. For they had never cared to make any progress and had executed their works, not in the good manner of ancient Greece, but in the rude modern style of that time. Cimabue drew from nature to the best of his powers, although it was a novelty to do so in those days, and he made the draperies, garments, and other things somewhat more life-like, natural, and soft than the Greeks had done, who had taught one another a rough, awkward, and commonplace style for a great number of years, not by means of study but as a matter of custom, without ever dreaming of improving their designs by beauty of colouring or by any invention of worth.

If you were to see a picture by Cimabue (there is one in the National Gallery which resembles his work so closely that it is sometimes said to be his), you would think less highly than Vasari of the life-like quality of his art, though there is something dignified and stately in the picture of the Virgin and Child with angels that he painted for the Church of St. Francis at Assisi. Another story is told by Vasari of a picture by Cimabue, which tradition asserts to be the great Madonna, still in the Church of Santa Maria Novella at Florence.

> Cimabue painted a picture of Our Lady for the church of Santa Maria Novella. The figure was of a larger size than any which had been executed up to that time, and the people of that day who had never seen anything better, considered the work so marvellous that they carried it to the church from Cimabue's house in a stately procession with great rejoicing and blowing of trumpets, while Cimabue himself was highly rewarded and honoured. It is reported, and some records of the old painters relate, that while Cimabue was painting this picture in some gardens near the gate of S. Piero, the old King Charles of Anjou passed through Florence. Among the many entertainments prepared for him by the men of the city, they brought him to see the picture of Cimabue. As it had not then been seen by any one, all the men and women of Florence flocked thither in a crowd with the greatest rejoicings, so that those who lived in the neighbourhood called the place the 'Joyful Suburb' because of the rejoicing there. This name it ever

> afterwards retained, being in the course of time enclosed within the walls of the city.

For this story we may thank Vasari, because it helps us to realize the love the people of Florence felt for the pictures in their churches, and the reverence in which they held an artist who could paint a more beautiful picture of the Virgin and Child than any they had seen before. It is difficult to think of the population of a town to-day walking in procession to honour the painter of a fine picture; but a picture of the Madonna was a very precious thing indeed to a Florentine of the thirteenth century, and we may try to imagine ourselves walking joyfully in that Florentine procession so as the better to understand Florentine Art.

I have repeated this legend about Cimabue, because he was the master of Giotto, who is called the Father of Modern Painting. The story is that Cimabue one day came upon the boy Giotto, who was a shepherd, and found him drawing a sheep with a pointed piece of stone upon a smooth surface of rock. He was so much struck with the drawing that he took the boy home and taught him, and soon he in his turn far surpassed his master. In order to appreciate Giotto we need to go to Assisi, Florence, or Padua, for in each place he has painted a series of wall-paintings. In the great double church of Assisi, built by the Franciscans over the grave of St. Francis within a few years of his death, Giotto has illustrated the whole story of his life. An isolated reproduction of one scene would give you no idea of their power. In many respects he was an innovator, and by the end of his life had broken away completely from the Byzantine school of painting. He composed each one of the scenes from the life of St. Francis in an original and dramatic manner, and so vividly that a person unacquainted with the story would know what was going on. Standing in the nave of the Upper Church, you are able to contrast these speaking scenes of the lives of people upon earth, with the faded glories of great-winged angels and noble Madonnas with Greek faces, that were painted in the Byzantine style when the church was at its newest, before Giotto was born. These look down upon us still from the east end of the church.

Giotto died in 1337, and for the next fifty years painters in Italy did little but imitate him. Scenes from the life of St. Francis and incidents from the legends of other saints remained in vogue, but they were not treated in original fashion by succeeding artists. The new men only tried to paint as Giotto might have painted, and so far from surpassing him, he was never even equalled by his followers.

We need not burden our memories with the names of these 'Giottesque' artists; and now, after this glimpse of an almost vanished world, we will turn our attention to England and to the first picture of our choice.

CHAPTER III

RICHARD II.

Our first picture is a portrait of Richard II. on his coronation day in the year 1377, when he was ten years old. It is the earliest one selected, and the eyes of those who see it for the first time will surely look surprised. The jewel-like effect of the sapphire-winged angels and coral-robed Richard against the golden background is not at all what we are accustomed to see. Nowadays it may take some time and a little patience before we can cast ourselves back to the year 1377 and look at the picture with the eyes of the person who painted it. Let us begin with a search for his purpose and meaning at least.

The picture is a diptych—that is to say, it is a painting done upon two wings or shutters hinged, so as to allow of their being closed together. You have no doubt been wondering why I called it a portrait, for the picture is far from being what to-day would commonly be described as such. Richard himself is not even the most conspicuous figure; and he is kneeling and praying to the Virgin. What should we think if any living sovereign, ordering a state portrait, had himself portrayed surrounded on one side by his predecessors on the throne, and on the other side by the Virgin and Child and angels? But, in the fourteenth century, it was nothing strange that the Virgin and Child, the angels, John the Baptist, Edward the Confessor, Edmund the Martyr, and Richard II. should be thus depicted. When we have realized that it was usual for a royal patron to command and an artist to paint such an assemblage of personages, as though all of them were then living and in one another's presence, we have learnt something significant and impressive about a way of thinking in the Middle Ages. Richard II. thought of himself as the successor of a long line of kings, appointed by the Divine Power to rule a small portion of the Divine Territories, so what more natural than that he, as the newly reigning sovereign, should have his portrait painted, surrounded by his holiest predecessors upon the throne, and in the act of dedicating his kingdom to the Virgin Mary?

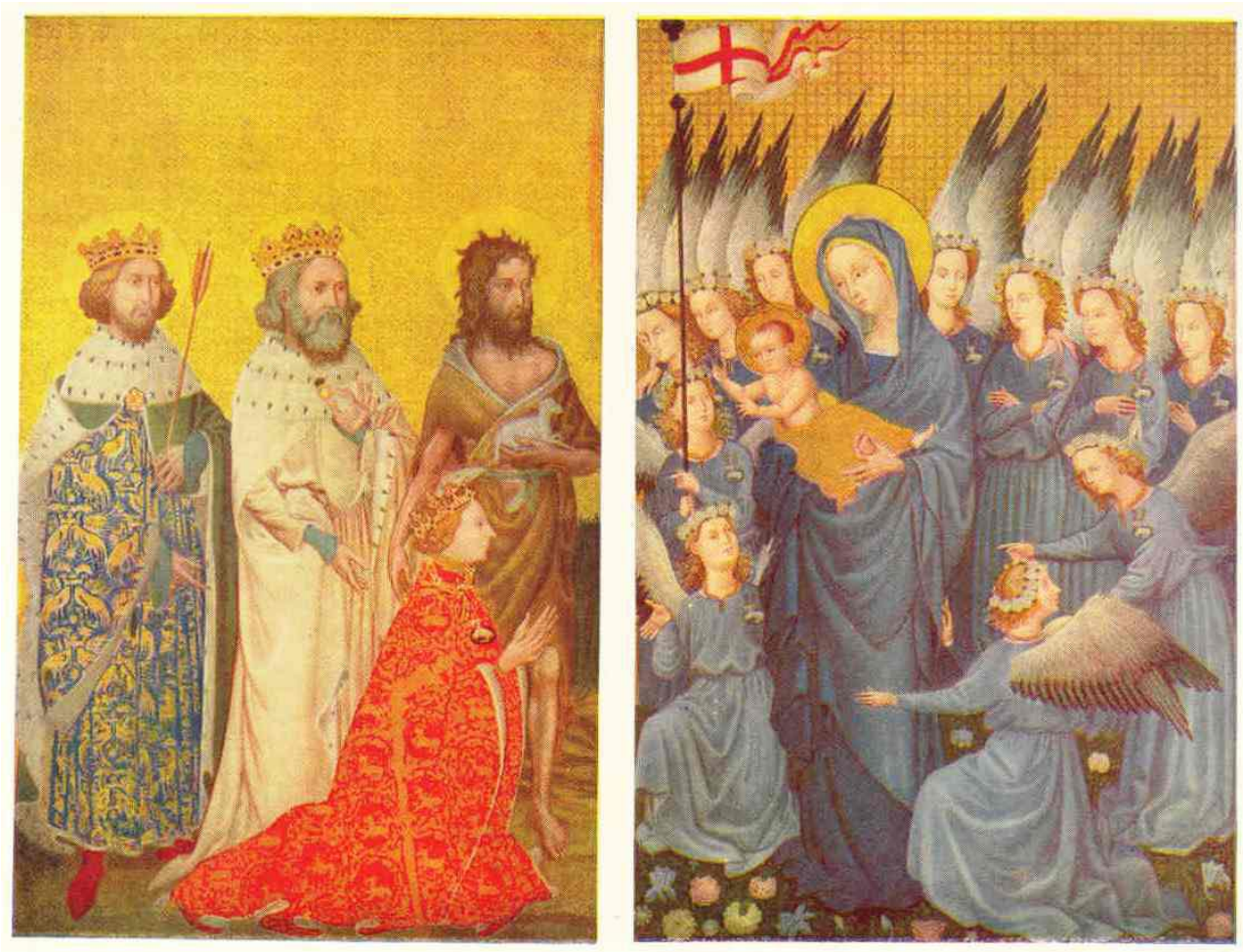
In an account given of his coronation we read that, after the ceremony in Westminster Abbey, Richard went to the shrine of Our Lady at Pewe, near by, where he made a special offering to Our Lady of eleven angels, each wearing the King's badge, one for each of the eleven years of his young life. What form this offering of angels took, we know not; they may have been little wooden figures, or coins with an angel stamped upon them; but it is reasonable to connect the offering with this very

picture of Our Lady and the angels. The King's special badges were the White Hart and the Collar of Broom-pods which you see embroidered all over his magnificent red robe. The White Hart is pinned in the form of a jewel beneath his collar, and each of the eleven angels bears the badge upon her shoulder and the Collar of Broom-pods round her neck. One of the King's angels gives the Royal Standard of England with the Cross of St. George on it to the Infant Christ in token of Richard's dedication of his kingdom to the Virgin and Child.

Edward III. died at Midsummer 1377 and Richard succeeded him in his eleventh year, having been born on January 6, 1367. It is necessary to note the exact day of the year when these events took place, for it can have importance in determining the saint whom a personage chiefly honoured as patron and protector. In this instance St. John the Baptist, whose feast occurs on June 23, near to the day of Richard's accession, obviously stands as patron saint of the young King. Next to him is King Edward the Confessor, the founder of Westminster Abbey, who was canonized for his sanctity and who points to Richard II. as his spiritual successor upon the throne. In medieval art the saints are distinguished by their emblems, which often have an association with the grim way in which they met their death, or with some other prominent feature in their legend. Here Edward holds up a ring, whereof a pretty story is told. Edward once took it off his finger to give it to a beggar, because he had no money with him. But the beggar was no other than John the Evangelist in disguise, and two years later he sent the ring back to the King with the message that in six months Edward would be in the joy of heaven with him. William Caxton, the first English printer, relates in his life of King Edward that when he heard the message he was full of joy and let fall tears from his eyes, giving praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God.

St. Edmund, who stands next to Edward the Confessor, is the other saintly King of England; after whom the town of Bury St. Edmunds takes its name. He was shot to death with arrows by the Danes because he would not give up Christianity. If I could show you several suitably chosen pictures at once, you would recognize in the arrangement of the three Kings here (two standing, one kneeling before the Virgin and Child) a plain resemblance to the typical treatment of a well-known subject—the Adoration of the Magi. You remember how when the three Wise Men of the East—always thought of in the Middle Ages as Kings—had followed the star which led them to the manger where Christ was born, they brought Him gold and frankincense and myrrh as offerings. This beautiful story was a favourite one in the Middle Ages, often represented in sculpture and painting. One King always kneels before the Virgin and Child, presenting his gift, whilst the other two stand behind with theirs in their hands. The standing Kings and the kneeling Richard in our picture, are grouped in just the same relation to the divine Infant as the three Magi. The imitation of the type is clear. There was a special reason for this, in that the birthday of Richard fell upon January 6, the feast of the Epiphany, when the Wise Men did homage to the

Babe. The picture, by reminding us of the three Wise Men, commemorated the birthday of the King as well as his coronation, the two chief dates of his life.



RICHARD II. BEFORE THE VIRGIN AND CHILD
From a picture by an unknown artist in the Wilton House Collection

You have some idea now of the train of thought which this fourteenth-century painter endeavoured to express in his picture commemorative of the coronation of a King. A medieval coronation was a very solemn ceremony indeed, and the picture had to be a serious expression of the great traditions of the throne of England, suggested by the figures of St. Edward and St. Edmund, and of hope for future good to the realm, to ensue from the blessings of the Virgin and Child upon the young King. Religious feeling is dominant in this picture, and if from it you could turn to others of like date, you would find the same to be true. The meaning was the main thing thought of. When Giotto painted his scenes from the life of St. Francis, his first aim was that the stories should be well told and easily grasped by all who looked at

them. Their beauty was of less importance. This difference between the aim of art in the Middle Ages and in our own day is fundamental. If you begin by picking to pieces the pictures of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries because the drawing is bad, the colouring crude, and the grouping unnatural, you might as well never look at them at all. Putting faults and old fashions aside to think of the meaning of the picture, we shall often be rewarded by finding a soul within, and the work may affect us powerfully, notwithstanding its simple forms and few strong colours.

Nevertheless, after the painter had planned his picture so as to convey its message and meaning, he did try to make it beautiful to look upon, and he often succeeded. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it was beauty of outline and a pleasant patching together of bright colours for which the painters strove, both in pictures and in manuscripts. If you think of this picture for a moment as a coloured pattern, you will see how pretty it is. The blue wings against the gold background make a hedge for the angel faces and look extremely well. If the figure of Richard II. seems flat, if you feel as though he were cut out of cardboard and had no thickness, then turn your mind to consider only the outline of the figure. It is very graceful. Artists in the thirteenth century sometimes made their figures over-long if they thought that a sweep of graceful line would look well in a certain position in their picture; the drapery was bent into impossible curves if so they fell into a pretty pattern.

In the fourteenth century, beauty of outlines still prevailed, even when they contained plain masses of brilliant colour so pure and gem-like that the pictures almost came to look like stained-glass windows. In fact probably the constant sight of stained-glass windows in the churches greatly influenced the painters' way of work. The contrast of divers colours placed next one another was more startling than we find in later painting, whilst an effort was made to finish every detail as though it were to be looked at through a magnifying glass.

In this picture which we are now learning how to see, the Virgin was to be shown standing in a meadow of flowers. A modern artist knows how to paint the general effect of many flowers growing out of grass, but the medieval painter had not the skill to do that. He had not learnt to look at the effect of a mass of flowers as a whole, nor could he have rendered such an effect with the colours and processes he possessed. He knew what one flower looked like, and thought that many must be a continued repetition of one. But it was impossible to paint a great number of flowers close together, each finished in detail, so he chose instead to paint a few as completely as he could, and leave the rest to the imagination of the spectator. That was his way of making a selection from nature; thus he hoped to suggest the idea of a flowery meadow, since he could not hope to render the look of it.

Likewise, all the details of the dresses are minutely painted. The robes of Richard and of Edmund the Martyr are beautiful examples of the careful and painstaking work characteristic of the Middle Ages. No medieval painter spared himself trouble.

Although he had not mastered the art of drawing the figure, he had learnt how to paint jewellery and stuffs beautifully, and delighted in doing it. The drawing of the figures you can see to be imperfect, yet nothing could be sweeter in feeling than the bevy of girl angels with roses in their hair surrounding the Virgin. Most of them are not unlike English girls of the present day, and the critics who say that this picture must have been painted by a Frenchman may be asked where he is likely to have found these English models for his angels.

Possibly the face of Richard himself may have been painted from life, for the features correspond closely enough with the large full-face portrait of him in Westminster Abbey, and with the sculptured figure upon his tomb. He certainly does not look like a child of ten, for his state robes and crown give him a grown-up appearance. But if you regard the face carefully you can see that it is still that of a child.

The gold background in the original shines out brilliantly, for after the gold was laid on, it was polished with an agate, which gives it a burnished effect, and then the little patterns were carefully punched so as not to pierce the gold and thereby expose the white ground beneath. There is a jewel-like quality in the colour such as you can see in manuscripts of the time, and it is possible that the painter may have learned his art as an illuminator of manuscripts. Artists in those days seldom confined themselves to one kind of work. We do not know this man's name, and are not even certain whether he was French or English.

Before, as in the time of Richard, painting had been mainly a decorative art, and the object of making pictures was to adorn the pages of a book, or the walls and vaults of a building. The most vital artistic energies of Western Europe in the thirteenth century had gone into the building of the great cathedrals and abbeys, which are to-day the glory of that period. Most medieval paintings that still exist in England are decorative wall-paintings of this kind, and only traces of a few remain. In many country places you can see poor and faded vestiges of painting which adorned church walls in the thirteenth century, and occasionally you may come upon a bit by some chance better preserved. These old wall-paintings were done upon the dry plaster. The discovery, or rather the revival, of 'fresco' painting (that is, of painting done upon the wet surface of freshly plastered walls, a more durable process) was made in Italy and did not penetrate to England.

Richard II. was not the only art-loving King of his time. You have read of John, King of France, who was taken prisoner at the Battle of Poitiers by the Black Prince, father of Richard. During his captivity he lived in considerable state in London at the Savoy Palace, which occupied the site of the present Savoy Hotel in the Strand; he brought his own painter from France with him, who painted his portrait which still exists in Paris. This King John was the father of four remarkable sons, Charles V., King of France, with whom Edward III. and the Black Prince fought the latter part of the Hundred Years' War; Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy; John, Duke of Berry; and

Louis, Duke of Anjou. In this list, all are names of remarkable men and great art-patrons, about whom you may some day read interesting things. Numerous lovely objects still in existence were made for them, and would not have been made at all if they had not been the men they were. It was only just becoming possible in the fourteenth century for a prince to be an art-patron. That required money, and hitherto even princes had rarely been rich. The increasing wealth of England, France, and Flanders at this time was based upon the wool industry and the manufacture and commerce to which it gave rise. The Lord Chancellor in the House of Lords to this day sits on a woolsack, which is a reminder of the time when the woolsacks of England were the chief source of the wealth of English traders.

After the Black Death, an awful plague that swept through Europe in 1349, a large part of the land of England was given up to sheep grazing, because the population had diminished, and it took fewer people to look after sheep than it did to till the soil. Although this had been an evil in the beginning, it became afterwards a benefit, for English wool was sold at an excellent price to the merchants of Flanders, who worked it up into cloth, and in their turn sold that all over Europe with big profits. The larger merchants who regulated the wool traffic were prosperous, and so too the landowners and princes whose property thus increased in value. The four sons of King John became very wealthy men. Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, by marrying the heiress of the Count of Flanders acquired the Flemish territory and the wealth obtained from the wool trade and manufacture there. Berry and Anjou were great provinces in France yielding a large revenue to their two Dukes. Each of these princes employed several artists to illuminate books for him in the most splendid way; they built magnificent châteaux, and had tapestries and paintings made to decorate their walls. They employed many sculptors and goldsmiths, and all gave each other as presents works of art executed by their favourite artists. In the British Museum there is a splendid gold and enamel cup that John, Duke of Berry, caused to be made for his brother King Charles V.; to see it would give you a good idea of the costliness and elaboration of the finest work of that day. The courts of these four brothers were centres of artistic production in all kinds—sculpture, metal-work, tapestries, illuminated manuscripts and pictures, and there was a strong spirit of rivalry among the artists to see who could make the loveliest things, and among the patrons as to which could secure the best artists in his service.

These four princes gave an important impulse to the production of beautiful things in France, Burgundy, and Flanders, but it is needless to burden you with the artists' names.

In the fourteenth century an artist was a workman who existed to do well the work that was desired of him. He was not an independent man with ideas of his own, who attempted to make a living by painting what he thought beautiful, without reference to the ideas of a buyer. Of course, if people prefer and buy good things when they see them, good things will be likely to be made, but if those with money to spend

have no taste and buy bad things or order ugly things to be made, then the men who had it in them to be great artists may die unnoticed, because the beautiful things they could have made are not called for. To-day many people spend something upon art and a few spend a great deal. Let us hope we may not see too much of the money spent in creating a demand for what is bad rather than for what is beautiful.

It was not unusual in the fourteenth century for a man to be at one and the same time painter, illuminator, sculptor, metal-worker, and designer of any object that might be called for. One of these many gifted men, André Beauneveu of Valenciennes, a good sculptor and a painter of some exquisite miniatures, is sometimes supposed to have been the painter of our picture of Richard II. In the absence of any signature or any definite record it is impossible to say who painted it, but it is unnecessary to assume that it must have been painted by a French artist, since we know that at the end of the fourteenth century there were very good painters in England.

It was by no means an exception not to sign a picture in those days, for the artists had not begun to think of themselves as individuals entitled to public fame. Hand-workers of the fourteenth century mostly belonged to a corporation or guild composed of all the other workers at the same trade in the same town, and to this rule artists were no exception. Each man received a recognized price for his work, and the officers of the guild saw to it that he obtained that price and that he worked with good and durable materials. There were certain advantages in this, but it involved some loss of freedom in the artist, since all had to conform to the rules of the guild. The system was characteristic of the Middle Ages, and arose from the fact that in those troublous times every isolated person needed protection and was content to merge his individuality in some society in order to obtain it. The guilds made for peace and diminished competition, so that a guildsman may have been less tempted to hurry over or scamp his task. The result was much honest, careful work such as you see in the original of this picture. We are told by those who know best that there has never been a time when the actual workmanship of the general run of craftsmen was better than in the Middle Ages.

This picture of Richard II. has not faded or cracked or fallen off the panel, and it seems as though we may hope it never will, for it was well made and, what is even more important, it seems always to have been well cared for. If only the nice things that are produced were all well cared for, how many more of them there would be in the world!

CHAPTER IV

THE VAN EYCKS

Before passing to Hubert van Eyck, the painter of the original of our next picture, please compare carefully the picture of Richard II. and this of the Three Maries, looking first at one and then at the other. The subject of the visit of the Maries to the Sepulchre is, of course, well known to you, but let us read the beautiful passage from St. Matthew telling of it, that we may see how faithfully in every detail it was followed by Hubert van Eyck.

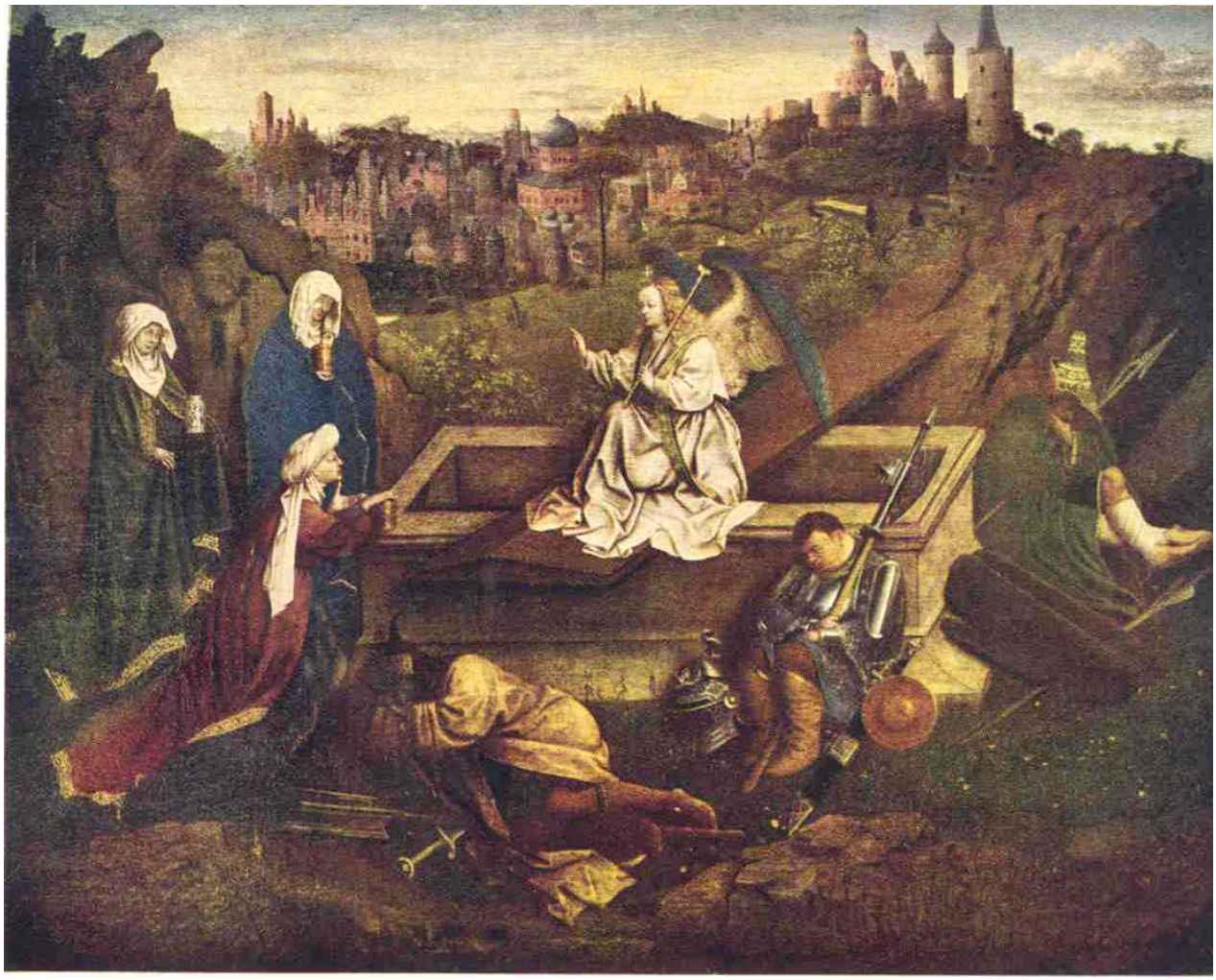
> In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, to see the Sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the Angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

Surely this would be thought a beautiful picture had it been painted at any time, but when you compare it with the Richard II. diptych does it not seem to you as though a long era divided the two? Yet one was painted less than fifty years after the other. It is the attitude of mind of the painter that makes the difference.

In the diptych, although the portrait of Richard himself was a likeness, the setting was imaginary and symbolic. The artist wished to tell in his picture how all the Kings who succeed one another upon the throne of England alike depend upon the protection of Heaven, and how Richard in his turn acknowledged that dependence, and pledged his loyalty to the Blessed Virgin and her Holy Child. That picture was intended to take the mind of the spectator away from the everyday world and suggest grave thought, and such was likewise in the main the purpose of all paintings in the Middle Ages. But we are now leaving the Middle Ages behind and approaching a new world nearer to our own.

Hubert van Eyck, in attempting to depict the event at the Sepulchre as it might actually have occurred outside the walls of the City of Jerusalem, was doing

something quite novel in his day. His picture might almost be called a Bible illustration. It is at least painted in the same practical spirit as that of a man painting an illustration for any other book. It is not a picture meant to help one to pray, or meditate. It does not express any religious idea. It was intended to be the veracious representation of an actual event, shown as, and when, and how it happened, true to the facts so far as Hubert knew them.



THE THREE MARIES
From the picture by Hubert van Eyck, in Sir Frederick Cook's Collection, Richmond

He has dressed the Maries in robes with wrought borders of Hebrew characters, imitated from embroidered stuffs, such as at that time were imported into Europe from the East. The dresses are not accurate copies of eastern dresses; Hubert would scarcely have known what those were like, but was doing his best to paint costumes that should look oriental. Mary Magdalen wears a turban, and the keeper on the right has a strange peaked cap with Hebrew letters on it. Hebrew scholars have done their best to read the inscriptions on these clothes, but we must infer that Hubert

only copied the letters without knowing what they meant, since it has not been possible to make any sense of them. In the foreground are masses of flowers most carefully painted, and so accurately drawn that botanists have been able to identify them all; several do not grow in the north of Europe. The town at the back is something like Jerusalem as it looked in Hubert van Eyck's own day. A few of the buildings can be identified still, and a general view of Jerusalem taken in 1486, sixty years after the death of Hubert, bears some resemblance to the town in this picture. The city is painted in miniature, much as it would look if you saw it from near at hand. Every tower, house, and window is there. You can even count the battlements. The great building with the dome in the middle of the picture, is the Mosque of Omar, which occupies the supposed site of Solomon's Temple.

Some people have thought that perhaps Hubert van Eyck, and his brother John, actually went to the East. Many men made pilgrimages in those days, and almost every year parties of Christian pilgrims went to Jerusalem. It was a rough and even a dangerous journey, but not at all impossible for a patient traveller. Dr. Hulin, who has made wonderful discoveries about the early Flemish painters, found a mention, in an old sixteenth-century list, of a 'Portrait of a Moorish King or Prince' by Van Eyck, painted in 1414 or perhaps 1418. If he painted a portrait of an oriental prince, he may have visited one oriental country at least, or at any rate the south of Spain. Probably enough during that journey he made studies of the cypress, stone-pine, date-palm, olive, orange, and palmetto, which occur in his pictures. They grow in the south of Spain and other Mediterranean regions, but not in the cold north where Hubert spent most of his days.

It is difficult at first to realize what an innovation it was for Hubert van Eyck to paint such a landscape. In the Richard II. diptych there is just a suggestion of brown earth for the saints to stand upon, but the rest of the background is of gold, as was the common practice at the time. The great innovator, Giotto, in some of his pictures had attempted to paint landscape backgrounds. In his fresco of St. Francis preaching to the birds there is a tree for them to perch on, but it seems more like a garden vegetable than a tree. Even his buildings look as though they might fall together any moment like a pack of cards. Hubert not only gives landscape a larger place than it ever had in any great picture before, but he paints it with such skill and apparent confidence that we should never dream he was doing it almost for the first time.

St. Matthew says: 'As it began to *dawn* towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, to see the Sepulchre.' Even in this point Hubert wished to be accurate. The rising sun is hidden behind the rocks on the left side of the picture, for it was not until years later that any painter ventured to paint the sun in the heavens. But the rays from the hidden orb strike the castles on the hills with shafts of light. The town remains in shadow, while the sky is lit up with floods of glory. An effect such as this must have been very carefully studied from nature. Hubert was evidently one who looked at the world with observant eyes and found it

beautiful. When he had flowers to paint, he painted the whole plant accurately, not the blossoms individually, like the painter of Richard II. He liked fine stuffs, embroideries, jewels, and glittering armour. He was no visionary trying to free himself from the earth and live in contemplation of the angels and saints in Paradise, like so many of the thirteenth and fourteenth century artists.

In this new delightful interest in the world as it is, he reflected the tendency of his day. The fifty years that had elapsed between the painting of Richard II.'s portrait and the work of the Van Eycks, had seen a great development of trade and industry in Flanders. Hubert was born, perhaps about 1365, at Maas Eyck, from which he takes his name. Maas Eyck was a little town on the banks of the river Maas, near the frontier of the present Holland and Belgium. He may have spent most of his life in Ghent, the town officials of which city paid him a visit in 1425 to see his work, and gave six groats to his apprentices in memory of their visit. Where he learnt his art, where he worked before he came to Ghent, we do not know for certain, but there is reason to think that he was employed for a while in Holland by the Count.

John, his brother, concerning whom more facts have been gathered, is said to have been twenty years younger than Hubert. He was a painter too, and worked in the employ of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy and Count of Flanders, the grandson of Philip the Bold, who was one of those four sons of King John of France mentioned in our last chapter. Philip the Good continued the traditions of his family and was in his time a great art-patron. His grandfather had fostered an important school of sculpture in Flanders and Burgundy, which culminated in the superb statues still existing at Dijon. Like his brother the Duke of Berry, he had given work to a number of miniature painters. The Count of Holland also employed some wonderful miniature painters to beautify a manuscript for him. This manuscript and one made for the Duke of Berry were among the finest ever painted so far as the pictures in them are concerned. The Count of Holland's book used to be in the library at Turin, where it was burnt a few years ago, so we can see it no more. But the fortunate ones who did see it thought that the pictures in it were actually painted by the Van Eycks when they were young. The Duke of Berry's finest book is at Chantilly and is well known. Both this and the Turin book contained the loveliest early landscapes, a little earlier in date than this landscape in the 'Three Maries' picture. So you see why it is said that the illuminators first invented beautiful landscape painting, and that landscapes were painted in books before they were painted as pictures to hang on walls.

The practical spirit in which Hubert van Eyck worked exactly matched the sensible, matter-of-fact Flemish character. The Flemings, even in pictures of the Madonna, wanted the Virgin to wear a gown made of the richest stuff that could be woven, truthfully painted, with jewels of the finest Flemish workmanship, and they liked to see a landscape behind her studied from their own native surroundings.

No man could try to paint things as they looked, in the way Hubert did, without making great progress in drawing. If you compare the drawing of the angel appearing to the Maries with any of the angels wearing the badge of Richard II., you will see how much more life-like is the angel of Hubert. The painter of Richard II. was not happy with his figures unless they were standing up or kneeling in profile, but Hubert van Eyck can draw them with tolerable success lying down, or sitting huddled. He can also combine a group in a natural manner. The absence of formal arrangement in the picture of the Maries is quite new in medieval art.

The painter of Richard II. had known very little about perspective. The science of drawing things as they look from one point of view has no doubt been taught to all of you. You know certain rules about vanishing points and can apply them in your drawing. But you would have found it very hard to invent perspective without being taught. I can remember drawing a matchbox by the light of nature, and very queer it contrived to become. Medieval artists were in exactly that same case. The artists of the ancient world had discovered some of the laws of perspective, but the secret was lost, and artists in the Middle Ages had to discover them all over again. Hubert van Eyck made a great stride toward the attainment of this knowledge. When you look at the picture the perspective does not strike you as glaringly wrong, though there was still much that remained to be discovered by later men, as we shall see in our next chapter.

The brothers Van Eyck were, first and foremost, good workmen. Few other painters in the whole of the world's history have aimed at anything like the same finish of detail. In the original of this picture the oriental pot which the green Mary holds in her hand is a perfect marvel of workmanship. There is no detail so small but that when you look into it you discover some fresh wonder. A story is told of how Hubert van Eyck painted a picture upon which he had lavished his usual painstaking care. But when he put it in the sun to dry, the panel cracked down the middle. After this disappointment Hubert went to work and invented a new substance with which colours are made liquid, a 'medium' as it is called, which when mixed with colour dried hard and quickly. It was possible to paint with the new medium in finer detail than before, and the Flemish artists universally adopted it. While very little was remembered about the facts of Hubert van Eyck's life, his name was always associated with the discovery of a new method of painting, and on that account held in great honour.

The 'Three Maries' is in many respects the most attractive of the pictures ascribed to Hubert, but his most famous work was a larger picture, or assemblage of pictures framed together, the 'Adoration of the Lamb,' in St. Bavon's Church at Ghent. It is an altar-piece—a painting set up over an altar in a church or chapel to aid the devotions of those worshipping there. Many of the panels of the Ghent altar-piece are now in the Museums of Berlin and Brussels. They belonged to the wings or shutters which were made to close over the central parts, and which used also to be painted outside

and inside with devotional or related subjects. The four great central panels on which these shutters used to close are still at Ghent. The subject of the 'Adoration of the Lamb' was taken from Revelations, where before the Lamb has opened the seals of the book, St. John says:

> And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

Hubert has figured this verse by assembling, as in one time and place, representatives of Christendom. They who worship are the prophets, apostles, popes, martyrs, and virgins. On each side of the central panel the just judges, the soldiers of Christ, the hermits, and the pilgrims, advance to join the throng around the Lamb. Most beautiful of all is the crowd of virgin martyrs bearing palms, moving over the green grass carpeted with flowers, to adore the Lamb of God, the Redeemer of the World. Above, God the Father, the Virgin Mother, and St. John the Baptist, with crowns of wonderful workmanship, are throned amid choirs of singing and playing angels on either hand.

The picture does not illustrate the description of the Adoration of the Lamb in the fifth chapter of Revelations so faithfully as the picture of the 'Three Maries' illustrated St. Matthew. The Lamb has not seven horns and seven eyes, and the four beasts and twenty-four elders are not falling down before it and adoring. The Lamb is an ordinary sheep, and the picture is a symbolic expression of the Catholic faith, founded upon a biblical text, but not what could be described as 'a Bible illustration.' People in the Middle Ages liked to embody their faith in a visible form, and we are told that theologians frequently drew up schemes of doctrine which painters did their best to translate into pictures, and sculptors into sculpture. Such works of art were for instruction rather than beauty, though some also served well the purpose of decoration.

Josse Vyt, who ordered the picture, and whose portrait, with that of his wife, is painted on the shutters, no doubt explained exactly what he wanted, and Hubert sought to please him.[1] But although the design of the central panel was old-fashioned and symbolic, Hubert was able to do what he liked with the landscape, and with the individual figures. They are real men and women with varieties of expression such as had not been painted before, and the landscape is even more beautiful than the one at the back of the 'Three Maries.' Snow mountains rise in the distance, and beautiful cypresses and palms of all kinds clothe the green slopes behind the Lamb. There are flowers in the grass and jewels for pebbles in the brook. Behind, you can see the Cathedrals of Utrecht and Cologne, St. John's of Maestricht, and more churches and houses besides, and the walls of a town, and wide stretches of green country.

[Footnote 1: There are reasons for thinking that the picture may have been ordered by some prince who died before it was finished, and that Vyt only acquired it later, in time to have his own and his wife's portraits added on the shutters.]

Hubert van Eyck died in 1426, and the picture was finished by his younger brother John, of whose life, though more is known than of Hubert's, we need not here repeat details. Many of his pictures still exist, and the most delightful of them for us are his portraits. He was not the first man to paint good portraits, but few artists have ever painted better likenesses. It seems evident that the people in his pictures are 'as like as they can stare,' with no wrinkle or scratch left out. Portraits in earlier days than these were seldom painted for their own sake alone. A pious man who wanted to present an altar-piece or a stained-glass window to a church would modestly have his own image introduced in a corner. By degrees such portraits grew in size and scale, and the neighbouring saints diminished, till at last the saints were left out and the portrait stood alone. Then it came about that such a picture was hung in its owner's house rather than in a church. One of the best portraits John van Eyck ever painted is at Bruges—the likeness of his wife. The panel was discovered about fifty years ago in the market-place of Bruges, where an old woman was using the back of it to skin eels on; but so soundly had the picture been painted that even this ill-usage did not ruin it. The lady was a very plain Flemish woman with no beauty of feature or expression, but John has revealed her character so vividly that to look at her likeness is to know her. It is indeed a long leap from the Richard II. of fifty years before, with its representation of the outline of a youth, to this ample realization of a mature woman's character.John lived till 1441, and had some pupils and many imitators. One of these, Roger van der Weyden by name, spread his influence far and wide throughout the whole of the Netherlands, France, and Germany. How important this influence was in the history of art we shall see later. Many of the imitators of John learnt his accuracy and thoroughness of workmanship, but none of them attained his deep insight into character.

During the next fifty years many and beautiful were the pictures produced throughout Flanders. All of them have a jewel-like brilliance of colour, approaching in brightness the hues of the Richard II. diptych. The landscape backgrounds are charming miniatures of towns by the side of rivers with spanning bridges. The painting of textures is exquisite. But the Flemish face, placid, plump, and fair-haired, prevails throughout. In the pictures of Paradise, where the saints and angels play with the Infant Christ, we still feel chained to the earth, because the figures and faces are the unidealized images of those one might have met in the streets of Bruges and Ghent. This is not a criticism on the artists. The merit of their work is unchallenged; and how could they paint physical beauty by them scarce ever seen? Yet when all has been said in praise of the Flemish School, the brothers Van Eyck, the founders of it, remain its greatest representatives, and their work is still regarded with that high and almost universal veneration which is the tribute of the greatest achievement.

CHAPTER V

THE RENAISSANCE

Who is this old gentleman in our next picture reading so quietly and steadily? Does he not look absorbed in his book? Certainly the peacock, the bird, and the cat do not worry him or each other, and there is still another animal in the distance—a lion! Can you see him? He is walking down the cloister pavement on the right, with his foot lifted as though it were hurt. The story is that this particular lion limped into the monastery in which this old man lived, and while all the other monks fled in terror, this monk saw that the lion's fore-paw was hurt. He raised it up, found what was the matter, and pulled out the thorn; and ever afterwards the lion lived peacefully in the monastery with him. Now, whenever you see a lion in a picture with an old monk, him you will know to be St. Jerome. He was a learned Christian father who lived some fifteen hundred years ago, yet his works are still read, spoken, and heard every day throughout the world. He it was who made the standard Latin version of the Scriptures. The services in Roman Catholic churches in all countries are held in Latin to this day, and St. Jerome's translation of the Bible, called the Vulgate, is the version still in use.

Here you see St. Jerome depicted sitting in his own study, reading to prepare himself for his great undertaking; and what a study it is! You must go to the National Gallery to enjoy all the details, for the original painting is only 18 inches high by 14 inches broad, and the books and writing materials are so tiny that some are inevitably lost in this beautiful photograph. The study is really a part of a monastery assigned to St. Jerome himself, his books, manuscripts, and other such possessions. He has a pot of flowers and a dwarf tree, and a towel to dry his hands on, and a beautiful chair at his desk. He has taken off his dusty shoes and left them at the foot of the steps.

The painter of this picture, must have had in his mind a very happy idea of St. Jerome. Others have sometimes painted him as they thought he looked when living in a horrible desert, as he did for four years. But at the time this picture was painted, about the year 1470, St. Jerome in his study was a more usual subject for painters than St. Jerome in the desert. One reason of this was that in Italy, in the latter half of the fifteenth century, St. Jerome was considered the patron saint of scholars, and for the first time since the fall of the Roman Empire, scholars were perhaps the most influential people of the day.

ST. JEROME IN HIS STUDY
From the picture by Antonello da Messina, in the National Gallery, London

Of course you all know something about the remarkable revival of learning in the fifteenth century, which started in Italy, spread northward, and reached England in the reign of Henry VIII. Before the fifteenth century, Italians seem to have been indifferent to the monuments around them of ancient civilization. Suddenly they were fired with a passion for antiquity. They learnt Greek and began to take a keen interest in the doings of the Greeks and Romans, who in many ways had lived a life so far superior to their own. Artists studied the old statues, which taught them the beauty of the human figure. The reacquired wisdom of the ancients by degrees broke down the medieval barriers. There was born a spirit of enterprise into the world of thought as well as into the world of fact, which revolutionized life and art. The period which witnessed this great mental change is well known as the Renaissance or 'rebirth.'

When you first looked at this picture you must have thought it very different from the two earlier ones. Such a subject could only have been painted thus in an age when men admired the scholar's life. Though the figure is called that of St. Jerome, there is really nothing typically saintly about him; he is only serious. The subjects chosen by painters of the Renaissance were no longer almost solely religious, but began to be selected from the world of everyday life; even when the subject was taken from Christian legend, it was now generally treated as an event happening in the actual world of the painter's own day.

The manner in which this picture is painted is still more suggestive of change than the subject itself. Our artist knew a great deal about the new science of perspective, for instance. One might almost think that, pleased with his new knowledge, he had multiplied the number of objects on the shelves so as to show how well he could foreshorten them. Medieval painters had not troubled about perspective, and were more concerned, as we have seen, to make a pretty pattern of shapes and colours for their pictures. The Van Eycks, as we noted, only acquired the beginnings of an understanding of it, and were very proud of their new knowledge. It was in Italy that all the rules were at last brought to light.

The Renaissance Period in Italy may be considered as lasting from 1400 to 1550. The pioneer artists who mastered perspective and worked at the human figure till they could draw it correctly in any attitude, lived in the first seventy-five years of the fifteenth century. They were the breakers of stone and hewers of wood who prepared the way for the greater artists of the end of the century, but in the process of learning, many of them painted very lovely things.

The painter of our picture lived within those seventy-five years. He was, probably, a certain Antonello of Messina—that same town in Sicily recently wrecked by earthquakes. Of his life little is known. He seems to have worked chiefly in Venice where there was a fine school of painting during the Renaissance Period; his senior Giovanni Bellini, one of the early great painters of Venice, some of whose pictures

are in the National Gallery, taught him much. It is also said that Antonello went to the Netherlands and there learnt the method of laying paint on panel invented by the Van Eycks. Modern students say he did not, but that he picked up his way of painting in Italy. Certainly he and other Venetians and Italians about this time improved their technical methods as the Van Eycks had done, and this picture is an early example of that more brilliant fashion of painting. There is here a Flemish love of detail. The Italian painters had been more accustomed to painting upon walls than the Flemings, for the latter had soon discovered that a damp northern climate was not favourable to the preservation of wall-paintings. Fresco does not admit of much detail, as each day's work has to be finished in the day, before the plaster dries. Thus, a long tradition of fresco painting had accustomed the Italian painters to a broad method of treatment, which they maintained to a certain extent even in their panel pictures. But in our St. Jerome we see a wealth of detail unsurpassed even by John van Eyck.

One needs a magnifying-glass to see everything there is to be seen in the landscape through the window on the left. Besides the city with its towers and walls and the mountains behind, there is a river in the foreground where two little people are sitting in a boat. Observe every tiny stone in the pavement, and every open page of the books on the shelves. Here, too, is breadth in the handling. Hold the book far away from you, so that the detail of the picture vanishes and only the broad masses of the composition stand out. You still have what is essential. The picture is one in which Italian feeling and sentiment blend with Flemish technique and love of little things. There has always been something of a mystery about the picture, and you must not be surprised some day if you hear it asserted that Antonello did not paint it at all. Such changes in the attributions of unsigned paintings are not uncommon.

One of the greatest pioneer artists of the fifteenth century was Andrea Mantegna of Padua in the north of Italy. More than any other painter of his day, he devoted himself to the study of ancient sculpture, even to the extent of sometimes painting in monochrome to imitate the actual marble. Paintings by him, which look like sculptured reliefs, are in the National Gallery; and at Hampton Court is a series of cartoons representing the Triumph of Julius Caesar, in which the conception and the handling are throughout inspired by old Roman bas-reliefs. In other pictures of his, the figures look as though cast of bronze, for he was likewise influenced by the sculptors of his own day, particularly by the Florentine Donatello, one of the geniuses of the early Renaissance. Mantegna's studies of form in sculpture made him an excellent draughtsman. Strangely enough, it was this very severe artist who was, perhaps, the first to depict the charm of babyhood. Often he draws his babes wrapped in swaddling clothes, with their little fingers in their mouths, or else in the act of crying, with their eyes screwed up tight, and their mouths wide open. Such a combination of hard sculpturesque modelling with extreme tenderness of feeling has a charm of its own.

We have now just one more picture of a sacred subject to look at, one of the last that still retains much of the old beautiful religious spirit of the Middle Ages. The painter of it, Sandro Botticelli, a Florentine, in whom were blended the piety of the Middle Ages and the intellectual life of the Renaissance, was a very interesting man, whose like we shall not find among the painters of his own or later days. He was born in 1446, in Florence, the city in Italy most alive to the new ideas and the new learning. Its governing family, the Medici, of whom you have doubtless read, surrounded themselves with a brilliant society of accomplished men, and adorned their palaces with the finest works of art that could be produced in their time. The best artists from the surrounding country were attracted to Florence in the hope of working for the family, who were ever ready to employ a man of artistic gifts.

In such an atmosphere an original and alert person like Botticelli could not fail to keep step with the foremost of his day. His fertile fancy was charmed by the revived stories of Greek Mythology, and for a time he gave himself up to the painting of pagan subjects such as the Birth of Venus from the Sea, and the lovely allegory of Spring with Venus, Cupid, and the Three Graces. He was one of the early artists to break through the old wall of religious convention, painting frankly mythological subjects, and he did them in an exquisite manner all his own.

The true spirit of beauty dwelt within him, and all that he painted and designed was graceful in form and beautiful in colour. If, for instance, you look closely into the designs of the necks of dresses in his pictures, you will find them delightful to copy and far superior to the ordinary designs for such things made to-day. In his love of beauty and his keen appreciation of the new possibilities of painting he was a true child of the Renaissance, though he had not the joyous nature so characteristic of the time. Moreover, as I have said, he retained the old sweet religious spirit, and clothed it with new forms of beauty in his sacred paintings. There is something pathetic about many of these—the Virgin, while she nurses the Infant Christ, seems to foresee all the sorrow in store for her, and but little of the joy. The girl angels who nestle around her in so many of his pictures, have faces of exquisite beauty, but in most of them, notwithstanding the fact that they are evidently painted from Florentine girls of the time, Botticelli has infused his own personal note of sadness.

At the end of the fifteenth century, when Botticelli was beginning to grow old, great events took place in Florence. Despite the revival of learning, we are told by historians that the Church was becoming corrupt and the people more pleasure-loving and less interested in the religious life. Then it was that Savonarola, a friar in one of the convents of Florence, all on fire with enthusiasm for purity and goodness, began to awaken the hearts of the people with his burning eloquence, and his denunciations of their worldliness and the deadness of the Church. He prophesied a great outpouring of the wrath of God, and in particular that the Church would be purified and renewed after a quick and terrible punishment. The passion, the conviction, the eloquence of Savonarola for a time carried the people of Florence away, and Botticelli

with them, so that he became one of the 'mourners' as the preacher's followers were called.

At this time many persons burnt in great 'bonfires of vanities' all the pretty trinkets that they possessed. But when the prophecies did not literally come true, and the people began to be weary of Savonarola's vehemence, we read that a reaction set in, which afforded a chance for his enemies within the Church, whom he had lashed with his tongue from the pulpit of the cathedral. They contrived to have him tried for heresy and burnt in the market-place of Florence, in the midst of the people who so shortly before had hung on every word that fell from his lips.

This tragedy entirely overwhelmed Botticelli, who thenceforward almost abandoned painting, and gave up his last years to the practices of the religious life. It was at this time, says Mr. Horne, and under the influence of these emotions, in the year 1500, when he was sixty years of age, that he painted the picture here reproduced, as an illustration to the prophecies of Savonarola, and a tribute to his memory. Savonarola had been wont to use the descriptions, in the Book of Revelations, of the woes that were to fall upon the earth before the building of the new Jerusalem, to illustrate his prophecy of the scourge that was to come upon Italy, before the Church became purified from the wickedness of the times. At the top of the picture is written in Greek:

> I, Sandro, painted this picture at the end of the year 1500, during the troubles of Italy, in the half year after the first year of the loosing of the Devil for 3½ years, in accordance with the fulfilment of the 11th chapter of the Revelations of St. John. Then shall the Devil be chained, according to the 12th chapter, and we shall see him trodden down as in the picture.

The Devil which was loosed for three and a half years stood for the stage of wickedness through which Botticelli believed that Florence was passing in 1500. In the bottom corners of the picture you can see minute little devils running away discomfited; otherwise all is pure joy and peace, symbolic of the gladness to come upon Italy when the Church had been purified:

> When Life is difficult, I dream
> Of how the angels dance in Heaven.
> Of how the angels dance and sing
> In gardens of eternal spring,
> Because their sins have been forgiven....
> And never more for them shall be
> The terrors of mortality.
> When life is difficult, I dream
> Of how the angels dance in Heaven....[2]

[Footnote 2: By Lady Alfred Douglas.]

That is what Botticelli dreamed. He saw the beautiful angels in green, white, and red dancing with joy, because of the birth of their Saviour, and into their hands he put scrolls, upon which were written:—'Glory to God in the Highest.' The rest of the verse, 'Peace and goodwill towards men' is on the scrolls of the shepherds, brought by the angel to behold the Babe lying in the manger. The three men, embraced with such eagerness and joy by the three angels in the foreground, are Savonarola and his two chief companions, burnt with him, who, after their long suffering upon earth, have found reward and happiness in heaven.

Such is the meaning of this beautiful little picture, as spiritual in idea as any of the paintings of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. But while the earlier painters had striven with inadequate powers to express the religious feeling that was in them, Botticelli's skill matched his thought. His drawing of the angels in their Greek dresses is very lovely, and one scarce knows in any picture a group surpassing that of the three little ones upon the roof of the manger, nor will you soon see a lovelier Virgin's face than hers. Botticelli had great power of showing the expression in a face, and the movement in a figure. Here the movements may seem overstrained, a fault which grew upon him in his old age; the angel, with the two shepherds on the right, has come skimming over the ground and points emphatically at the Babe, and the angel in front embraces Savonarola with vehemence. The artists of the early Renaissance had learnt with so much trouble to draw figures in motion that their pleasure in their newly acquired skill sometimes made them err by exaggeration as their predecessors by stiffness.

The way in which Botticelli treated this subject of the Nativity of Christ, is, as you see, very different from the way in which Hubert van Eyck painted the Three Maries at the Sepulchre. We saw how the latter pictured the event as actually taking place outside Jerusalem. To Botticelli the Nativity of Christ was emblematic of a new and happier life for people in Florence, with the Church regenerated and purified, as Christ would have wished it to be. To him the Nativity was a symbol of purity, so he painted the picture as a commentary on the event, not as an illustration of the Biblical text.

The angels rejoice in heaven as the shepherds upon earth, the devils flee away discomfited, and Savonarola and his companions obtain peace after the tribulations of life. Such was the message of Botticelli in the picture here reproduced

THE NATIVITY
From the picture by Sandro Botticelli, in the National Gallery, London

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CHAPTER VI

RAPHAEL

The original of our next picture is very small, only seven inches square, yet I hope it will instantly appeal to you. The name of the artist, Raphael, is perhaps the most familiar of all the names of the Old Masters, mainly, it may be, because he was the painter of the Sistine Madonna, the best known and best loved of Madonnas.

When Raphael drew and painted this picture of the 'Knight's Dream,' about the year 1500, he was himself like a young knight, at the outset of his short and brilliant career. As a boy he was handsome, gifted, charming. His nature is said to have been as lovely as his gifts were great, and he passed his short life in a triumphant progress from city to city and court to court, always working hard and always painting so beautifully that he won the admiration of artists, princes, and popes. His father, Giovanni Santi, was a painter living in the town of Urbino, in Central Italy, but Raphael when quite young went to Perugia to study with the painter Perugino, a native of that town.

Perugia stands upon a high hill, like the hill in the background of the picture of the 'Knight's Dream,' only higher, for from it you can overlook the wide Umbrian plain as far as Assisi—the home of St. Francis—which lies on the slope of the next mountain. That beautiful Umbrian landscape, in which all the towns look like castles perched upon the top of steep hills, with wide undulating ground between, occurs frequently in the pictures of Perugino, and often in those of his pupil Raphael. If you have once seen the view from Perugia for yourself, you will realize how strongly it took hold of the imagination of the young painter. Raphael had a most impressionable mind. It was part of his genius that, from every painter with whom he came in contact he imbibed the best, almost without knowing it. The artists of his day, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and the other great men, were each severally employed in working out once and for all some particular problem in connection with their art. Michelangelo, a giant in intellect, painter, sculptor, architect, and poet, studied the human body as it had not been studied since the days of ancient Greece. His sculptured figures on the tombs of the Medici in Florence rank second only to those of the greatest Greek sculptors, and his ceiling in the Sistine Chapel is composed of a series of masterpieces of figure-painting. He devoted himself largely in his sculpture

and his painting to the representation of the naked human body, and made it futile in his successors to plead ignorance as an excuse for bad drawing. As a colourist he was not pre-eminent, and his few panel pictures are for the most part unfinished.

Leonardo da Vinci, the older contemporary of Raphael, first in Florence and afterwards in the north of Italy, left a colossal reputation and but few pictures, for in his search after perfection he became dissatisfied with what he had done and is said to have destroyed one masterpiece after another. For him the great interest in the aspect of man and woman was not so much the form of the body as the expression of the face. What was fantastic and weird fascinated him. At Windsor are designs he made for the construction of an imaginary beast with gigantic claws. He once owned a lizard, and made wings for it with quicksilver inside them, so that they quivered when the lizard crawled. He put a dragon's mask over its head, and the result was ghastly. The tale gives us a side light on this extraordinary personage. When you are led to read more about him you will feel the fascination of his strong, yet perplexing personality. The faces in his pictures are wonderful faces, with a fugitive mocking smile and a seeming burden of strange thought. By mastery of the most subtle gradations of light, his heads have an appearance of solidity new in painting, till Raphael and some of his contemporaries learnt the secret from Leonardo. Heretofore, Italian painters had been contented to bathe their pictures in a flood of diffused light, but he experimented also with effects of strong light and shade on the face. His landscape backgrounds are an almost unearthly cold grey, and include the strangest forms of rock and mountain. His investigations into several of the scientific problems connected with art led to results which affected in an important degree the work of many later artists.

If Raphael had less originality than Michelangelo or Leonardo, if Leonardo was the first artist to obtain complete mastery over the expression of the face and Michelangelo over the drawing of the figure, Raphael was able to profit at once by whatever they accomplished. Yet never was he a mere imitator, for all that he absorbed became tinged with a magical charm in his fertile brain, a charm so personal that his work can hardly be mistaken for that of any other artist.

Our picture of a 'Knight's Dream' was probably painted while Raphael was under the influence of a master named Timoteo Viti, whose works you are not likely to know, or much care about when you see them. It was just after he had painted it that he came into Perugino's hands.

Although the 'Knight's Dream' is so small, and Raphael was but a boy when he painted it, the picture has the true romantic air, characteristic of the joyful years of the early Renaissance. He does not seem to have felt the conflict between the old religious ideal and the new pursuit of worldly beauty as Botticelli felt it. Yet he chose the competition of these two ideals as the subject of this picture. The Knight, clothed in bright armour and gay raiment, bearing no relation at all to the clothes worn in

1500, rests upon his shield beneath the slight shade of a very slender tree. In his dream there appear to him two figures, both of whom claim his knightly allegiance for life: one, a young and lovely girl in a bright coloured dress with flowers in her hair, tempts him to embrace a life of mirth, of

> Jest and youthful Jollity,
> Quips and Cranks and wanton Wiles,
> Nods and Becks and wreathed Smiles.

The other resembles the same poet's

> Pensive Nun, devout and pure,
> Sober, steadfast, and demure.

She holds sword and book, symbols of stern action and wise accomplishment. Which the knight will choose we are not told, perhaps because Raphael himself never had to make the choice. He was too gifted and too fond of work to be tempted from it by anything whatever. Always joyous and always successful, he was able to paint any subject, sacred, profane, ancient, or modern, so long as it was a happy one. He was too busy and too gay to feel pain and sorrow, as Botticelli felt them, and to paint sad subjects. To him the visible world was good and beautiful, and the invisible world lovely and happy likewise. His Madonnas are placid or smiling mothers. The fat and darling babies they hold are indeed divine but not awesome. Yet the extraordinary sweetness of expression, nobility of form, and beauty of colouring in the Madonnas make you almost hold your breath when you look at them.

In the 'Knight's Dream' there is a simple beauty in the pose and grouping of the figures. You can hardly fancy three figures better arranged for the purpose of the subject. There is something inevitable about them, which is the highest praise due to a mastery of design in the art of composition. Raphael's surpassing gift was in fitting beautiful figures into any given space, so that it seems as though the space had been made to fit the figures, instead of the figures to fit the space. You could never put his round Madonnas into a square frame. The figures would look as wrong as in a round frame they look right. If you were to cut off a bit of the foreground in any of his pictures and add the extra piece to the sky, you would make the whole look wrong, whereas perhaps you might add on a piece of sky to Hubert van Eyck's 'Three Maries' without spoiling the effect.

The colouring of the picture, too, is jewel-like and lovely, but the uncoloured drawing is itself full of charm. The grace of line, which was to distinguish all the works of his mature years, is already manifest in this effort of his boyhood. It seems to foretell the sweep of the Virgin's drapery in the Sistine Madonna, and the delightful maze of curves flowing together and away again and returning upon themselves which outline the face, the arms, hands, and draperies of St. Catherine in the National Gallery. You

will find it well worth a little trouble to look long and closely at one of Raphael's well-known Madonnas till you clearly see how the composition of all the parts of it is formed by the play of long and graceful curves.

THE KNIGHT'S DREAM
From the picture by Raphael, in the National Gallery, London

You can see from the drawing of the 'Knight's Dream,' which is hung quite near the painting in the National Gallery, how carefully Raphael thought out the detail of the

picture before he began to paint. He seems even to have been afraid that he might not be able to draw it again so perfectly; therefore he placed the drawing over the panel and pricked it through. The marks of the pin are quite clear, and it brings one nearer this great artist to follow closely the process of his work. It makes the young boy genius of 1500 almost seem akin to the struggling boy and girl artists of the present time.

From Perugia Raphael went to Florence, where he painted a number of his most beautiful Madonnas. Then, in 1508, he was called to Rome by Pope Julius II. to decorate some rooms in the Vatican Palace. The Renaissance popes were possessed of so great wealth, and spent it to such purpose, that its spending influenced the art of their age. Many of the rooms in the Vatican had been decorated by Botticelli and other good artists of the previous half-century, but already the new pope considered their work out of date and ordered it to be replaced by Michelangelo and Raphael. For nine years Raphael worked at the decoration of the palace, always being pressed, hurried, and even worried by two successive popes who employed him. The wall spaces which he had to fill were often awkwardly broken up with windows and doors, but he easily overcame whatever difficulties were encountered. To succeed apparently without struggle was a peculiar gift granted to Raphael above any other artist of his day. The frescoes painted by him in the Vatican illustrated subjects from Greek philosophy and medieval Church history, as well as from the Old and New Testament. As an illustrator of sacred writ he never attempted that verisimilitude in Eastern surroundings to which Hubert van Eyck leaned, neither was he satisfied with the dress of his own day in which other painters were wont to clothe their sacred characters. The historical sense, which has driven some modern artists to much antiquarian research to discover exactly what Peter and Paul must have worn, did not exist before the nineteenth century. Raphael felt, nevertheless, that the clothes of the Renaissance were hardly suitable for Noah and Abraham, so he invented a costume of his own, founded upon Roman dress, but different from oriental or contemporary clothes. The Scripture illustrations of Raphael most familiar to you may probably be his cartoon designs for tapestry in the South Kensington Museum, which were bought by Charles I. In these you can see what is meant about the clothes, but you will not be surprised at them, because the same have been adopted by the majority of Bible illustrators ever since the days of Raphael. His pictures became so popular that it was thought whatever he did must be right. The dress was a mere detail in his work, but it was easy to copy and has been copied persistently from that day to this. It is curious to think that the long white robes, which Christ wears in the illustrations of our present-day Sunday School books and other religious publications, are all due to imitation of Raphael's designs.

The first room he finished for Julius II. was so rich in effect and beautiful in colour that the Pope could scarcely wait for more rooms as fine. Raphael had to call in a large number of assistants to enable him to cover the walls fast enough to please the Pope, and the quality of the work began to deteriorate. The uneven merit of his

frescoes foretold the consequence of overwork despite his matchless facility and power. But in his panel pictures, when he was not hurried, his work continued to improve until he reached his crowning achievement in the Sistine Madonna painted three years before his death.

Raphael was thirty-seven when he died in 1520, and very far from coming to the end of his powers of learning. Each picture that he painted revealed to him new difficulties to conquer, and new experiments to try, in his art. We seem compelled to think that had he lived and laboured for another score of years, the history of painting in Italy might have been different. In Rome and Florence no successor attempted to improve upon his work. His pupils and assistants were more numerous than those of any other painter, but when they had obtained some of his facility of drawing and painting they were contented. None of them had Raphael's genius, yet all wished to paint like him; so that for the following fifty years Rome and Florence and Southern Italy were flooded with inferior Raphaelesque paintings, which tended to become more slip-shod in execution as time went on, and more devoid of any personal note. It was just as though his imitators had learnt to write beautifully and then had had little to say.

Leonardo da Vinci died a few months before Raphael. Several of his pupils were artists of ability, and lived to carry on his traditions of painting in the north of Italy. Leonardo himself had been so erratic, produced so little, and so few of his pictures survive, that many know him best in his pupils' work, or through copies and engravings of his great 'Last Supper'—a picture that became an almost total wreck upon the walls of the Refectory in Milan, for which it was painted. His influence upon his contemporaries at Milan was very great, so that during some years hardly a picture was painted there which did not show a likeness to the work of Leonardo. He had created a type of female beauty all his own. The face will impress itself upon your memory the first time you see it, whether in a picture by Leonardo or in one by a pupil. You can see it in the National Gallery in the great 'Madonna of the Rocks,' and in the magnificent drawing at Burlington House. It is not a very beautiful face, but it haunts the memory, and the Milanese artists of Leonardo's day never threw off their recollection of it.

With far less power than Leonardo, one of his imitators, Bernardino Luini, painted pictures of such charm and simplicity that almost everyone finds them delightful. If you could see his picture of the angels bearing St. Catherine, robed in red, through the air to her last resting-place upon the hill, you would feel the beauty and peace of his gentle nature revealed in his art. But the spell of Leonardo vanished with the death of those who had known him in life. The last of his pupils died in 1550, and with him the Leonardo school of painting came to an end.

There is one more painter belonging to the full Renaissance too famous to remain entirely unmentioned. This is Correggio, a painter affected also by the pictures of

Raphael and Leonardo, but individual in his vision and his work. He passed his life in Parma, in the north of Italy, inheriting a North Italian tradition, and hearing only echoes of the world beyond. His canvases are thronged with fair shapes, pretty women and dancing children, ethereally soft and lovely. But it is in his native town that the angels soar aloft with the Virgin in the dome of the cathedral, and the children frolic on the walls of the convent. These are his masterpieces you would like best.

In 1550 the impetus given to painting in Italy by the Renaissance was drawing to an end. The great central epoch may be said to have terminated in Tuscany a few years after the deaths of Leonardo and Raphael in 1520. But we have said nothing yet of Venice, where, in 1520, artists whose visions and whose record of them were to be as wonderful as those of Botticelli and Raphael, were as yet sleeping in their cradles.

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CHAPTER VII

THE RENAISSANCE IN VENICE

A visit to Venice is one of the joys which perhaps few of us have yet experienced. But whether we have been there or not, we all know that the very sound of her name is enchanting for those who are fresh from her magic—her sunrises and sunsets unmatched for colour, and her streets for silence.

The Venetians were a proud and successful people, wealthier by virtue of their great sea-trade than the citizens of Florence or of any other town in Italy; their foremost men lived in great high-roomed palaces, richly furnished, and decorated with pictures of a sumptuous pageantry. But the Venetians were not merely a luxurious people. The poetry of the lagoons, and the glory of the sunset skies, imparted to their lives the wealth of a rare romance. Even in Venice to-day, now that the steamers have spoilt the peace of the canals and the old orange-winged sailing-boats no longer crowd against the quays, the dreamy atmosphere of the city retains its spell.

Few artists ever felt and expressed this atmosphere better than Giorgione, the painter of the first of our Venetian pictures. He was one of the great artists of the Renaissance who died young, ten years before Raphael, but their greatness is scarcely comparable. Like Raphael, Giorgione was precocious, but unlike him he painted in a style of his own that from the very beginning owed little to any one else. He saw beauty in his own way, and was not impelled to see it differently by coming into contact with other artists, however great. Unlike Raphael, he was not a great master of the art of composition. In the little picture before us the grouping of the figures is not what may be called inevitable, like that in the 'Knight's Dream.' It seems as though one day when Giorgione was musing on the beauties of the world, and the blemishes of life, even life in Venice, he thought of some far-off time beyond the dawn of history when all men lived in peace. The ancient Greeks called this perfect time the 'Golden Age' of the world. In many ways their idea of it tallies with the description of the Garden of Eden, and they were always contrasting with it the 'Iron Age' in which they thought they lived, as the Hebrews contrasted the life of Adam and Eve in the garden with their own. As the fancy flashed across Giorgione's mind, perchance he saw some just king of whom his subjects felt no fear seated upon a throne like this. A dreamy youth plays soft music to him, and another hands him

flowers and fruit. Books lie strewn upon the steps, and a child stands in a reverent attitude before him. Wild and domestic animals live together in harmony; the ground is carpeted with flowers; all is peaceful. Such a subject suited the temperament of Giorgione, and he painted it in the romantic mood in which it was conceived. Nothing could be further from everyday life than this little scene. It has the unlaboured look that suits such an improvised subject. Of course no one knows for certain that this is a picture of the Golden Age, and you may make up any story you like about it for yourselves. That is one of the charms of the picture. It has been said that the throned one is celebrating his birthday, and that his little heir is reciting him a birthday ode accompanied by music. You may believe this if you like, but how do you then account for the leopard and the peacock living in such harmony together?

Giorgione painted a few sacred pictures and many mythological scenes, besides several very beautiful portraits of dreamy-looking poets and noblemen. But even when he illustrated some well-known tale, he did not care to seize upon the dramatic moment that gives the crisis of the story, as Giotto would have done, and as the painter of our next picture does. Violent action did not attract him. Whatever the subject, if it were possible to group the figures together at a moment when they were beautifully doing nothing, he did so. But he liked still more to paint ideal scenes from his own fancy, where young people sit in easy attitudes upon the grass, conversing for an instant in the intervals of the music they make upon pipes and guitar. He was the first artist, so far as I know, to paint these half real, half imaginary scenes, of which our picture may be one. In all of them landscape bears an important part, and in some the background has become the picture and completely subordinated the figures. In this little 'Golden Age' the landscape is quiet in tone, tinged with melancholy, romantic, to suit the mood of the figures. Its colouring, though rich, is subdued, more like the tints of autumn than the fresh hues of spring. The Venetians excelled in their treatment of colour. They lived in an uncommon world of it. Giorgione saw his picture in his mind's eye as a blaze of rich colour; he did not see the figures sharply outlined against a remote background, as are the three in Raphael's 'Knight's Dream.' That does not mean that Raphael, like the artist of the Richard II. diptych, failed to make his figures look solid, but that he saw beauty most in the outlines of the body and the curves of the drapery, irrespective of colour, whereas to Giorgione's eye outline was nothing without colour and light and shade. The body of the King upon the throne in our picture is massed against the background, but there is no definite outline to divide it from the tree behind. In this respect Giorgione was curiously modern for his date, as we shall see in pictures of a still later time.

Giorgione was only thirty-three years old when he died of the plague in 1510, the same year as Botticelli. His master, Giovanni Bellini, who was born in 1428, outlived him by six years, and the great Titian, his fellow-pupil in the studio of Bellini, lived another half-century or more.

"THE GOLDEN AGE"
From the picture by Giorgione, in the National Gallery, London

Titian in many ways summed up all that was greatest in Venetian art. His pictures have less romance than those of Giorgione, except during the short space of time when he painted under the spell of his brother artist. It is extremely difficult to distinguish then between Titian's early and Giorgione's late work. Titian perhaps had the greater intellect. Giorgione's pictures vary according to his mood, while Titian's express a less changeable personality. In spite of his youth, Giorgione made a profound impression upon all the artists of his time. They did not copy his designs, but the beauty of his pictures made them look at the world with his romantic eyes and paint in his dreamy mood. It was almost as though Giorgione had absorbed the romance of Venice into his pictures, so that for a time no Venetian painter could express Venetian romance except in Giorgione's way.

But in 1518, eight years after Giorgione's death, another great innovating master was born at Venice, Tintoret by name, who in his turn opened new visions of the world to the artists of his day. While painting in the rest of Italy was becoming mannered and sentimental, lacking in power and originality, Tintoret in Venice was creating masterpieces with a very fury of invention and a corresponding swiftness of hand. He was his own chief teacher. Outside his studio he wrote upon a sign to inform or attract pupils—'The design of Michelangelo and the colouring of Titian.' Profound study of the works of these two masters is manifest in his own. Like Michelangelo he worked passionately rather than with the sober competence of Titian. His thronging visions, his multitudinous and often vast canvases are a surpassing record. Prolonged study of the human form had given to him, as to Michelangelo, a wonderful power of drawing groups of figures. His mere output was marvellous, and much of it on a grandiose scale. He covered hundreds of square feet of ceilings and walls in Venice with paintings of subjects that had been painted hundreds of times before; but each as he treated it was a new thing. Centuries of tradition governed the arrangement of such subjects as the Crucifixion and the Last Judgment, so that even the free painters of the Renaissance had deviated but little from it. In Tintoret the freedom of the Renaissance reached its height. For him tradition had no fetters. When he painted a picture of Paradise for the Doge's Palace it measured 84 by 34 feet, and contained literally hundreds of figures. His imagination was so prolific that he seems never to have repeated a figure. New forms, new postures, new groupings flowed from his brush in exhaustless multitude.

It is necessary to go to Venice to see Tintoret's most famous works, still remaining upon the walls of the churches and buildings for which they were painted, or in which they have been brought together. But the National Gallery is fortunate in possessing one relatively small canvas of his which shows some of his finest qualities. The subject of St. George slaying the dragon was not a new one. It had been painted by Raphael and by several of the earlier Venetian painters, but Tintoret's treatment of it was all his own. In the earlier pictures, the princess, for whose sake St. George fights the dragon, was a little figure in the background fleeing in terror. St. George occupied the chief place, as he does upon the back of our gold sovereigns, where the

princess has been left out altogether. Tintoret makes her flee, but she is running towards the spectator, and so, in her flight, stands out the most conspicuous figure. One of the victims that the dragon has slain lies behind her. In the distance St. George fights with all his might against the powers of evil, whilst 'the splendour of God' blazes in the sky. There is a vividness and power about the picture that proclaims the hand of Tintoret. In contrast to Giorgione he liked to paint figures in motion, yet he was as typical an outcome of Venetian romance as the earlier painter. Nothing could be more like a fairy-tale than this picture. It was no listless dreamer that painted it, but one with a gorgeous imagination and yet a full knowledge of the world, enabling him to give substance to his visions. Tintoret's stormy landscapes are as beautiful in their way as Giorgione's dreamy ones, and each carries out the mood of the rest of the picture. This one is full of power, mystery, and romance. Tintoret had modelled his colouring upon Titian and was by nature a great colourist, but too often he used bad materials that have turned black with the lapse of years. In this picture you see his colour as it was meant to be, rich, and boldly harmonious. The vivid red and blue of the princess's clothes are a daring combination with the brilliant green of the landscape, but Tintoret knew what he was doing, and the result is superb. With his death in 1594 the best of Venetian painting came to an end.

There were as many excellent painters in the fairy city as there had been in Florence; contemporaries of Giovanni Bellini (who, in his early years, worked in close companionship with Mantegna, his brother-in-law), as well as contemporaries of Titian and Tintoret. The painter Veronese, for instance, died a few years before Tintoret. For pomp and pageantry his great canvases are eminent. Standing in some room of the Doge's Palace, decorated entirely by his hand, we are carried back to the time when Venice was Queen of the Seas, unrivalled for magnificence and wealth. He was the Master of Ceremonies, before whom other painters of pomps and vanities pale. Gorgeous colouring is what all these Venetian painters had in common. We see it in the early days when Venetian art was struggling into existence. In her art, as in her skies and waters, we are overwhelmed by a vision of colour unsurpassed.

We have now touched on a few prominent points in the history of painting in Italy from its early rise in Florence with Giotto; through its period of widespread excellence in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, when Raphael, Giorgione, Michelangelo, and Leonardo were all painting masterpieces in Florence, Venice, Rome, and Milan at the same moment; to its final blaze of sunset grandeur in Venice. It is time to return to the north of Europe. In the next chapter we will try to gain a few glimpses of the progress of painting in Germany, Holland, Flanders, and our own country.

ST. GEORGE DESTROYING THE DRAGON
From the picture by Tintoretto, in the National Gallery, London

CHAPTER VIII

THE RENAISSANCE IN THE NORTH

The Renaissance involved a change of outlook towards the whole world which could not long remain confined to Italy. There were then, as now, roads over the passes of the Alps by which merchants and scholars were continually travelling from Italy through Germany and Flanders to England, communicating to the northern countries whatever changes of thought stirred in the south.

In Germany, as in Italy, men speedily awoke to the new life, but the awakening took a different form. We find a different quality in the art of the north. Italian spontaneity and child-like joy is absent; so, too, the sense of physical beauty, universal in Italy. You remember how the successors of the Van Eycks in Flanders painted excellent portraits and small carefully studied pictures of scriptural events in wonderful detail. They were a strictly practical people whose painting of stuffs, furs, jewellery, and architecture was marvellously minute and veracious. But they were not a handsome race, and their models for saints and virgins seem to have been the people that came handiest and by no means the best looking. Thus the figures in their pictures lack personal charm, though the painting is usually full of vigour, truth, and skill.

When Flemings began to make tours in Italy and saw the pictures of Raphael, in whom grace was native, they fell in love with his work and returned to Flanders to try and paint as he did. But to them grace was not God-given, and in their attempt to achieve it, their pictures became sentimental and postured, and the naïve simplicity and everyday truth, so attractive in the works of the earlier school, perished. The influence of the Van Eycks had not been confined to Flanders. Artists in Germany had been profoundly affected. They learnt the new technique of painting from the pupils of the Van Eycks in the fifteenth century. Like them, too, they discarded gold backgrounds and tried to paint men and women as they really looked, instead of in the old conventional fashion of the Middle Ages. Schools of painting grew up in several of the more important German towns, till towards the end of the fifteenth century two German artists were born, Albert Dürer at Nuremberg in 1471, and Hans Holbein the younger at Augsburg in 1497, who deserve to rank with the greatest painters of the time in any country.

Dürer is commonly regarded as the most typically German of artists, though his father was Hungarian, and as a matter of fact he stands very much alone. His pictures and engravings are 'long, long thoughts.' Every inch of the surface is weighted with meaning. His cast of mind, indeed, was more that of a philosopher than that of an artist. In a drawing which Dürer made of himself in the looking-glass at the age of thirteen, we see a thoughtful little face gazing out upon the world with questioning eyes. Already the delicacy of the lines is striking, and the hair so beautifully finished that we can anticipate the later artist whose pictures are remarkable for so surprising a wealth of detail. The characteristics of the Flemish School, carefulness of workmanship and indifference to the physical beauty of the model, to which the Italians were so sensitive, continued in his work. For thoroughness his portraits can be compared with those of John van Eyck. In the National Gallery his father lives again for us in a picture of wonderful power and insight.

Dürer was akin to Leonardo in the desire for more and yet more knowledge. Like him he wrote treatises on fortifications, human proportions, geometry, and perspective, and filled his sketchbooks with studies of plants, animals, and natural scenery. His eager mind employed itself with the whys and wherefores of things, not satisfied with the simple pleasure that sight bestows. In his engravings, even more than in his pictures, we ponder the hidden meanings; we are not content to look and rejoice in beauty, though there is much to charm the eye. His problems were the problems of life as well as the problems of art.

The other great artist of Germany, Hans Holbein the younger, was the son of Hans Holbein the elder, a much esteemed painter in Augsburg. This town was on the principal trade route between Northern Italy and the North Sea, so that Venetians and Milanese were constantly passing through and bringing to it much wealth and news of the luxury of their own southern life. As a result the citizens of Augsburg dressed more expensively and decorated their houses more lavishly than did the citizens of any other town in Germany. After a boyhood and youth spent at Augsburg, Holbein removed to Basle. He was a designer of wood-engravings and goldsmiths work and of architectural decoration, besides being a painter. In those days of change in South Germany, artists had to be willing to turn their hands to any kind of work they could get to do. North of the Alps, where the Reformation was upsetting old habits, an artist's life was far from being easy. Reformers made bonfires of sacred pictures and sculptured wooden altar-pieces. Indeed the Reformation was a cruel blow to artists, for it took away Church patronage and made them dependent for employment upon merchants and princes. Except at courts or in great mercantile towns they fared extremely ill. Altar-pieces were rarely wanted, and there were no more legends of saints to be painted upon the walls of churches.

The demand for portraiture, on the other hand, was increasing, whilst the growth of printing created a new field for design in the preparation of woodcuts for the

illustration of books. Thus it came to pass that the printer Froben, at Basle, was one of the young Holbein's chief patrons. We find him designing a wonderful series of illustrations of *The Dance of Death*, as well as drawing another set to illustrate *The Praise of Folly*, written by Erasmus, who was then living in Basle and frequenting the house of Froben. Erasmus was a typical scholar of the sixteenth century, belonging rather to civilized society as a whole than to any one country. He moved about Europe from one centre of learning to another, alike at home in educated circles in England, Flanders, and Germany. He had lived for some time in England and knew that there were men there with wealth who would employ a good painter to paint their portraits if they could find one. Erasmus himself sat to Holbein, and sent the finished portrait as a present to his friend Sir Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England.

In England, owing to the effects of the Wars of the Roses, good painters no longer existed. A century of neglect had destroyed English painting. Henry VIII., therefore, had to look to foreign lands for his court painter, and where was he to come from? France was the nearest country, but the French King was in the same predicament as Henry. He obtained his painters from Italy, and at one time secured the services of Leonardo da Vinci; but Italy was a long way off and it would suit Henry better to get a painter from Flanders or Germany if it were possible. So Erasmus advised Holbein to go to England, and gave him a letter to Sir Thomas More. On this first visit in 1526, he painted the portraits of More and his whole family, and of many other distinguished men; but it was not till his second visit in 1532 that he became Henry VIII.'s court painter. In this capacity he had to decorate the walls of the King's palaces, design the pageantry of the Royal processions, and paint the portraits of the King's family. Although Holbein could do and did do anything that was demanded of him, what he liked best was to paint portraits. Romantic subjects such as the fight of St. George and the dragon, or an idyll of the Golden Age, little suited the artistic leanings of a German. To a German or a Fleming the world of facts meant more than the world of imagination; the painting of men and women as they looked in everyday life was more congenial to them than the painting of saints and imaginary princesses.

But how unimportant seems all talk of contrasting imagination and reality when we see them fused together in this charming portrait of Edward, the child Prince of Wales. It belongs to the end of the year 1538, when he was just fifteen months old, and the imagination of Holbein equipped him with the orb of sovereignty in the guise of a baby's rattle. It is in the coupling of distant kingship and present babyhood that the painter works his magic and reveals his charm.

If you recall for a moment what you know of Henry VIII., his masterful pride, his magnificence, his determination to do and have exactly what he wanted, you will understand that his demands upon his court painter for a portrait of his only son and heir must have been high. No one could say enough about this wonderful child to

please Henry, for all that was said in praise of him redounded to the glory of his father.

EDWARD, PRINCE OF WALES, AFTERWARDS EDWARD VI.
From the picture by Holbein, in the Collection of the Earl of Yarborough, London

The following is a translation of the Latin poem beneath the picture:

> Child, of thy Father's virtues be thou heir,
> Since none on earth with him may well compare;
> Hardly to him might Heaven yield a son
> By whom his father's fame should be out-done.
> So, if thou equal such a mighty sire,
> No higher can the hopes of man aspire;
> If thou surpass him, thou shalt honoured be
> O'er all that ruled before, or shall rule after thee.[3]

[Footnote 3: Translated by Miss K. K. Radford.]

In justice be it said that the little Edward VI. was of an extraordinary precocity. When he was eight years old he wrote to Archbishop Cranmer in Latin. When he was nine he knew four books of Cato by heart as well as much of the Bible. To show you the way in which royal infants were treated in those days,—we read that at the time this picture was painted, the little prince had a household of his own, consisting of a lady-mistress, a nurse, rockers for his cradle, a chamberlain, vice-chamberlain, steward, comptroller, almoner, and dean. It is hard to believe that the child is only fifteen months old, so erect is the attitude, so intelligent the face. The clothes are sumptuous. A piece of stuff similar in material and design to the sleeve exists to-day in a museum in Brussels.

In the best sense Holbein was the most Italian of the Germans. For in him, as in the gifted Italian, grace was innate. He may have paid a brief visit to Italy, but he never lived there for any length of time, nor did he try to paint like an Italian as some northern artists unhappily tried to do. The German merits, solidity, boldness, detailed finish, and grasp of character, he possessed in a high degree, but he combined with them a beauty of line, delicacy of modelling, and richness of colour almost southern. His pictures appeal more to the eye and less to the mind than do those of Dürer. Where Dürer sought to instruct, Holbein was content to please. But like a German he spared no pains. He painted the stuff and the necklace, the globe and the feather, with the finish of an artist who was before all things a good workman. Observe how delicately the chubby little fingers are drawn. Holbein's detailed treatment of the accessories of a portrait is only less than the care expended in depicting the face. He studied faces, and his portraits, one may almost say, are at once images of and commentaries on the people they depict. Thus his gallery of pictures of Henry and his contemporaries show us at once the reflexion of them as in a mirror, and the vision of them as beheld by a singularly discerning and experienced eye that not only saw but comprehended.

This is the more remarkable because Holbein was not always able to paint and finish his portraits in the presence of the living model, as painters insist on doing

nowadays. His sitters were generally busy men who granted him but one sitting, so that his method was to make a drawing of the head in red chalk and to write upon the margin notes of anything he particularly wanted to remember. Afterwards he painted the head from the drawing, but had the actual clothes and jewels sent him to work from.

In the Royal Collection at Windsor there are a number of these portrait drawings of great interest to us, since many of the portraits painted from them have been lost. As a record of remarkable people of that day they are invaluable, for in a few powerful strokes Holbein could set down the likeness of any face. But when he came to paint the portrait he was not satisfied with a mere likeness. He painted too 'his habit as he lived.' Erasmus is shown reading in his study, the merchant in his office surrounded by the tokens of his business, and Henry VIII. standing firmly with his legs wide apart as if bestriding a hemisphere. But I think that you will like this fine portrait of the infant prince best of all, and that is why I have chosen it in preference to a likeness of any of the statesmen, scholars, queens, and courtiers who played a great part in their world, but are not half so charming to look upon as little Prince Edward.

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CHAPTER IX

REMBRANDT

After the death of Holbein, artists in the north of Europe passed through troublous times till the end of the sixteenth century. France and the Netherlands were devastated by wars. You may remember that the Netherlands had belonged in the fifteenth century to the Dukes of Burgundy? Through the marriage of the only daughter of the last Duke, these territories passed into the possession of the King of Spain, who remained a Catholic, whilst the northern portion of the Netherlands became sturdily Protestant. Their struggle, under the leadership of William the Silent, against the yoke of Spain, is one of the stirring pages of history. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, seven of the northern states of the Netherlands, of which Holland was the chief, had emerged as practically independent. The southern portion of the Netherlands, including the old province of Flanders, remained Catholic and was governed by a Spanish Prince who held his court at Brussels.

When peace came at last, there was a remarkable outburst of painting in each of the two countries. Rubens was the master painter in Flanders. Of him and of his pupil Van Dyck we shall hear more in the next chapter. In Holland there was a yet more wide-spread activity. Indomitable perseverance had been needed for so small a country to throw off the rule of a great power like Spain. The long struggle seems to have called into being a kindred spirit manifesting itself in every branch of the national life. Dutch merchants, Dutch fishermen, and Dutch colonizers made themselves felt as a force throughout the world. The spirit by which Dutchmen achieved political success was pre-eminent in the qualities which brought them to the front rank in art. There were literally hundreds of painters in Holland, few of them bad. That does not mean that all Dutchmen had the magical power of vision belonging to the greatest artists, the power that transforms the objects of daily view into things of rare beauty, or the imagination of a Tintoret that creates and depicts scenes undreamt of before by man. Many painted the things around them as they looked to a commonplace mind, with no glamour and no transforming touch. When we see their pictures, our eyes are not opened to new effects. We continue to see and to feel as we did before, but we admire the honest work, the pleasant colour, and the efficiency of the painters. In default of Raphaels, Giorgiones, and Titians, we should be pleased to hang upon our walls works such as those. But towering above the other

artists of Holland, great and small, was one Dutchman, Rembrandt, who holds his own with the greatest of the world.

He was born in 1606, the son of a miller at Leyden, who gave him the best teaching there to be had. Soon he became a good painter of likenesses, and orders for portraits began to stream in upon him from the citizens of his native town. These he executed well, but his heart was not wrapped up in the portrayal of character as John Van Eyck's had been. Neither was it in the drawing of delicate and beautiful lines that he wished to excel, as did Holbein and Raphael. He was the dramatist of painting, a man who would rather paint some one person ten times over in the character of somebody else, high priest, king, warrior, or buffoon, than once thoroughly in his own. But when people ordered portraits of themselves they wanted good likenesses, and Rembrandt was happy to supply them. At first it was only when he was working at home to please himself that he indulged his picturesque gift. He painted his father, his mother, and himself over and over again, but in each picture he tried some experiment with expression, or a new pose, or a strange effect of lighting, transforming the general aspect of the original. His own face did as well as any other to experiment with; none could be offended with the result, and it was always to be had without paying a model's price for the sitting. Thus all through his life, from twenty-two to sixty-three, we can follow the growth of his art with the transformation of his body, in the long series of pictures of his single self.

More than any artist that had gone before him, Rembrandt was fascinated by the problem of light. The brightest patch of white on a canvas will look black if you hold it up against the sky. How, then, can the fire of sunshine be depicted at all? Experience shows that it can only be suggested by contrast with shadows almost black. But absolutely black shadows would not be beautiful. Fancy a picture in which the shadows were as black as well-polished boots! Rembrandt had to find out how to make his dark shadows rich, and how to make a picture, in which shadow predominated, a beautiful thing in itself, a thing that would decorate a wall as well as depict the chosen subject. That was no easy problem, and he had to solve it for himself. It was his life's work. He applied his new idea in the painting of portraits and in subject pictures, chiefly illustrative of dramatic incidents in Bible history, for the same quality in him that made him love the flare of light, made him also love the dramatic in life.

Rembrandt's mother was a Protestant, who brought up her son with a thorough knowledge of the Scripture stories, and it was the Bible that remained to the end of his life one of the few books he had in his house. The dramatic situations that he loved were there in plenty. Over and over again he painted the Nativity of Christ. Sometimes the Baby is in a tiny Dutch cradle with its face just peeping out, and the shepherds adoring it by candle-light. Often he painted scenes from the Old Testament; such as Isaac blessing Esau and Jacob, who are shown as two little Dutch children. Simeon receiving the Infant Christ in the Temple is a favourite subject,

because of the varied effects that could be produced by the gloom of the church and the light on the figure of the High Priest. These, and many other beautiful pictures, were studies painted for the increase of the artist's own knowledge, not orders from citizens of Leyden, or of Amsterdam, to which capital he moved in 1630. At the same time he was coming more and more into demand as a portrait-painter. These were days in which he made money fast, and spent it faster. He had a craving to surround himself with beautiful works of art and beautiful objects of all kinds that should take him away from the dunes and canals into a world of romance within his own house. He disliked the stiff Dutch clothes and the great starched white ruffs worn by the women of the day. He had to paint them in his portraits; but when he painted his beautiful wife, Saskia, she is decked in embroideries and soft shimmering stuffs. Wonderful clasps and brooches fasten her clothes. Her hair is dressed with gold chains, and great strings of pearls hang from her neck and arms. Rembrandt makes the light sparkle on the diamonds and glimmer on the pearls. Sometimes he adorns her with flowers and paints her as Flora. Again, she is fastening a jewel in her hair, and Rembrandt himself stands by with a rope of pearls for her to don. All these jewels and rich materials belonged to him. He also bought antique marbles, pictures by Giorgione and Titian, engravings by Dürer, and four volumes of Raphael's drawings, besides many other beautiful works of art.

These were splendid years, years in which he was valued by his contemporaries for the work he did for them, and years in which every picture he painted for himself gave him fresh experience. A picture of the anatomy class of a famous physician had been among the first with which Rembrandt made a great public success. Every face in it—and there were eight living faces—was a masterpiece of portraiture, and all were fitly grouped and united in the rapt attention with which they followed the demonstration of their teacher.

In 1642 he received an order to paint a large picture of one of the companies of the City Guard of Amsterdam. According to the custom of the day, each person portrayed in the picture contributed his equal share towards the cost of the whole, and in return expected his place in it to be as conspicuous as that of anybody else. Such groups were common in Holland in the seventeenth century. The towns were proud of their newly won liberties, and the town dignitaries liked to see themselves painted in a group to perpetuate remembrance of their tenure of office. But Rembrandt knew that it was inartistic to give each and every person in a large group an equal or nearly equal prominence, although such was the custom to which even Franz Hals' brush had yielded full compliance. For his magnificent picture of the City Guard, Rembrandt chose the moment when the drums had just been sounded as an order for the men to form into line behind their chief officers' march-forth. They are coming out from a dark building into the full sunshine of the street. All in a bustle, some look at their fire-arms, some lift their lances, and some cock their guns. The sunshine falls full upon the captain and the lieutenant beside him, but the background is so dark that several of the seventeen figures are almost lost to view. A few of the heads

are turned in such a way that only half the face is seen, and no doubt as likenesses some of them were deficient. Rembrandt was not thinking of the seventeen men individually. He conceived the picture as a whole, with its strong light and shade, the picturesque crossing lines of the lances, and the natural array of the figures. By wiseacres, the picture was said to represent a scene at night, lit by torch-light, and was actually called the 'Night Watch,' though the shadow of the captain's hand is of the size of the hand itself, and not greater, being cast by the sun. Later generations have valued it as one of the unsurpassed pictures in the world; but it is said that contemporary Dutch feeling waxed high against Rembrandt for having dealt in this supremely artistic manner with an order for seventeen portraits, and that he suffered severely in consequence. Certainly he had fewer orders. The prosperous class abandoned him. His pictures remained unsold, and his revenue dwindled.

Rembrandt was thirty-six years of age and at the very height of his powers, at the time of the failure of this his greatest picture. His mature style of painting continued to displease his contemporaries, who preferred the work of less innovating artists who painted good likenesses smoothly. Every year his treatment became rougher and bolder. He transformed portraits of stolid Dutch burgomasters into pictures of fantastic beauty; but the likeness suffered, and the burgomasters were dissatisfied. Their conservative taste preferred the smooth surface and minute treatment of detail which had been traditional in the Low Countries since the days of the Van Eycks. Year after year more of their patronage was transferred to other painters, who pandered to their preferences and had less of the genius that forced Rembrandt to work out his own ideal, whether it brought him prosperity or ruin. These painters flourished, while Rembrandt sank into ever greater disrepute.

It is certain, too, that he had been almost childishly reckless in expenditure on artistic and beautiful things which were unnecessary to his art and beyond his means, although those for a while had been abundant. At the time of the failure of the 'Night Watch,' his wife Saskia died, leaving him their little son, Titus, a beautiful child. Through ever-darkening days, for the next fifteen years, he continued to paint with increasing power. It is to this later period that our picture of the 'Man in Armour' belongs.

The picture is not a portrait, but rather a study of light upon armour. No man came to Rembrandt and asked to be painted like that; but Rembrandt saw in his mind's eye a great effect—a fine knightly face beneath a shadowing helmet and set off against a sombre background. A picture such as this is a work of the imagination in the same sense as the 'Saint George and the Dragon' of Tintoret. It was an effect that only Rembrandt could see, painted as only he could paint it. The strongest light falls upon the breastplate, the next strongest upon the helmet, and the ear-ring is there to catch another gleam.

A MAN IN ARMOUR
From the picture by Rembrandt, in the Corporation Art Gallery, Glasgow

When you look at the picture closely, you can see that the lights are laid on (we might almost say 'buttered on') with thick white paint. More than once Rembrandt painted armour for the sake of the effects of light. In one of the portraits of himself he wears a helmet, and he painted his brother similarly adorned. A picture of a person wearing the same armour as in the Glasgow picture is in St. Petersburg, but the figure is turned in a slightly different direction and reflects the light differently. It is called 'Pallas Athene,' and was no doubt painted at the same time as ours; but the person, whether named Pallas Athene or knight, was but a peg upon which to hang the armour for the sake of the light shining on it.

Rembrandt was a typical Dutch worker all his life. Besides the great number of pictures that have come down to us, we have about three thousand of his drawings, and his etchings are very numerous and fine.

I wonder if you know how prints are made? There are, broadly speaking, two different processes. You can take a block of wood and cut away the substance around the lines of the design. Then when you cover with ink the raised surface of wood that is left and press the paper upon it, the design prints off in black where the ink is but the paper remains white where the hollows are. This is the method called wood-cutting, which is still in use for book illustrations.

In the other process, the design is ploughed into a metal plate, the lines being made deep enough to hold ink, and varying in width according to the strength desired in the print. You then fill the grooves with ink, wiping the flat surface clean, so that when the paper is pressed against the plate and into the furrows, the lines print black, out of the furrows, and the rest remains white.

There are several ways of making these furrows in a metal plate, but the chief are two. The first is to plough into the metal with a sharp steel instrument called a burin. The second is to bite them out with an acid. This is the process of etching with which Rembrandt did his matchless work. He varnished a copper plate with black varnish. With a needle he scratched upon it his design, which looked light where the needle had revealed the copper. Then the whole plate was put into a bath of acid, which ate away the metal, and so bit into the lines, but had no effect upon the varnish. When he wanted the lines to be blacker in certain places, he had to varnish the whole rest of the plate again, and put it back into the bath of acid. The lines that had been subjected to the second biting were deeper than those that had been bitten only once.

The number of plates etched by Rembrandt was great, at least two hundred; some say four hundred. Their subjects are very various—momentary impressions of picturesque figures, Scriptural scenes, portraits, groups of common people, landscapes, and whatever happened to engage the artist's fancy, for an etching can be very quickly done, and is well suited to record a fleeting impression. Thousands of

the prints still exist, and even some of the original plates in a very worn-down condition.

In spite of the quantity and quality of Rembrandt's work, he was unable to recover his prosperity. He had moved into a fine house when he married Saskia, and was never able to pay off the debts contracted at that time. Things went from bad to worse, until at last, in 1656, when Rembrandt was fifty, he was declared bankrupt, and everything he possessed in the world was sold. We have an inventory of the gorgeous pictures, the armour, the sculptures, and the jewels and dresses that had belonged to Saskia. His son Titus retained a little of his mother's money, and set up as an art dealer in order to help his father.

It is a truly dreary scene, yet Rembrandt still continued to paint, because painting was to him the very breath of life. He painted Titus over and over again looking like a young prince. In these later years the portraits of himself increase in number, as if because of the lack of other models. When we see him old, haggard, and poor in his worn brown painting-clothes, it hardly seems possible that he can be the same Rembrandt as the gay, frolicking man in a plumed hat, holding out the pearls for Saskia.

In his old age he received one more large order from a group of six drapers of Amsterdam for their portraits. It has been said that the lesson of the miscalled 'Night Watch' had been branded into his soul by misfortune. What is certain is that, while in this picture he purposely returned to the triumphs of portraiture of his youth, he did not give up the artistic ideals of his middle life. He gave his sitters an equal importance in position and lighting, and at the same time painted a picture artistically satisfying. Not one of the six men could have had any fault to find with the way in which he was portrayed. Each looks equally prominent in vivid life. Yet they are not a row of six individual men, but an organic group held together you hardly know how. At last you realize that all but one are looking at you. *You* are the unifying centre that brings the whole picture together, the bond without which, metaphorically speaking, it would fall to pieces.

This picture of six men in plain black clothes and black hats, sitting around a table, is by some considered the culmination of Rembrandt's art. It shows that, in spite of misfortune and failure, his ardour for new artistic achievement remained with him to the end.

In 1662 Rembrandt seems to have paid a brief and unnoticed visit to England. If Charles II. had heard of him and made him his court painter, we might have had an unrivalled series of portraits of court beauties by his hand instead of by that of Sir Peter Lely. As it was, a hasty sketch of old St. Paul's Cathedral, four years before it was burnt down, is the sole trace left of his visit.

The story of his old age is dreary. Even Titus died a few months before his father, leaving him alone in the world. In the autumn of 1669 he himself passed away, leaving behind him his painting-clothes, his paint-brushes, and nothing else, save a name destined to an immortality which his contemporaries little foresaw. All else had gone: his wife, his child, his treasures, and his early vogue among the Dutchmen of his time.

The last picture of all was a portrait of himself, in the same attitude as his first, but disillusioned and tragic, with furrowed lines and white hair. No one cared whether he died or not, and it is recorded that after his death pictures by him could be bought for sixpence. Thus ended the life of one of the world's supremely great painters.

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CHAPTER X

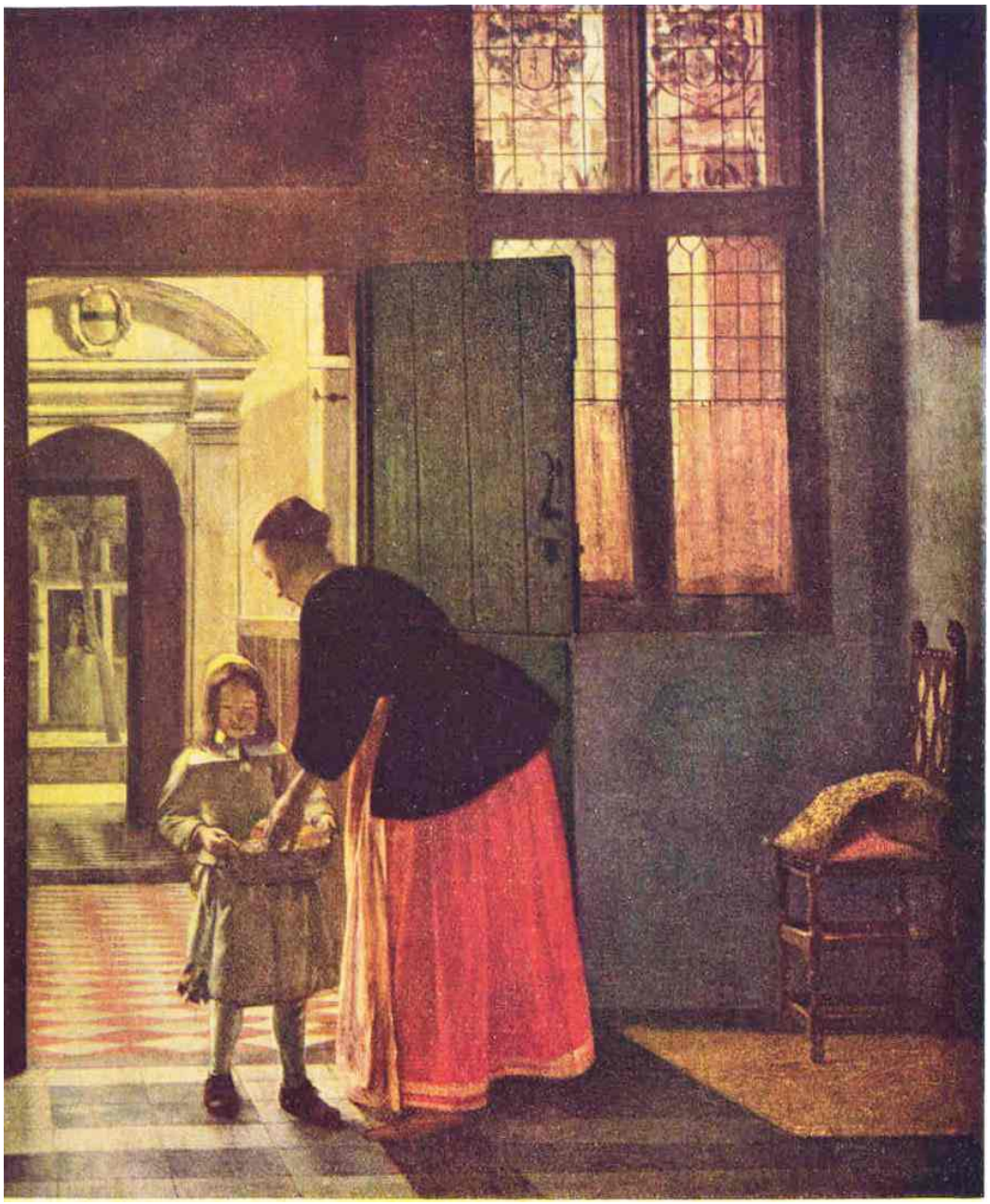
PETER DE HOOGH AND CUYP

Let us now turn from the splendid gloom of Rembrandt's 'Knight in Armour,' to delight in this beautiful little interior of a Dutch house by Peter de Hoogh. Still you see the prepossession for light, but for more tempered rays and softer shadows. The sunshine is diffused by the yellow curtains throughout the room. The old lady need not fear its revelations, to be sure, for it is Holland—she knows that the whole house has been duly scrubbed with soap and water. Dust and dirt are banished. It is a cloudless day and dry under foot, otherwise the little boy would have worn clogs over his shoes, and you might see them outside. Mud on the polished stones of the passage would have ruffled the housewife's calm. As it is, we can see she has had no worries this morning. She has donned her fresh red dress and clean white apron, and will soon be seated to prepare the vegetables and fruit that are being brought her. Perhaps they are a present from the old lady in the house over the way, who from her front door watches the child delivering the gift.

It is a domestic scene that you might witness in any of the old towns of Holland to this day. The insides and outsides of the houses are still scrubbed with soap and water; rows of clogs stand outside the front doors on muddy days; the women wear the same bright coloured gowns fully gathered round the waist, with the cleanest of white aprons; their faces are placid and unruffled as they pursue the even tenour of their way.

This atmosphere of Dutch life, peaceful, home-loving, and competent, is rendered by Peter de Hoogh in most of his pictures. It is not the atmosphere of Rembrandt's art, yet he never could have painted thus except for Rembrandt. The same love of sunlight and shadows prevailed with Peter de Hoogh, and it was no less the aim of his art to attain mastery over the painting of light, but light diffused and reflected. He loved to show the sunlight shining through some coloured substance, such as this yellow curtain, which scatters its brightness and lets it fall more evenly throughout the room. He never painted such extreme contrasts as make manifest Rembrandt's power. Rembrandt's light had been so vivid that it seemed to overwhelm colours in a dazzling brilliancy. Peter de Hoogh's lights are just strong enough to reveal the colours in a milder illumination. In our picture the sunshine diffused by the yellow

curtains mingles with the red of the woman's dress and creates a rich orange. Little does she know how well her dress looks. But it was only after incessant study of the way in which Rembrandt had mastered the whole range from light to dark, that Peter de Hoogh became able to paint as he did within his narrower scale, abridged at both extremes.



AN INTERIOR
From the picture by Pieter de Hoogh, in the Wallace Collection, London

Begin with the room, then the passage, then the farther hall, then the highway open to the unseen sky above, then the house-front beyond it, and the hall beyond the lady in the neighbouring doorway; there are at least four distinct distances in this picture each differently lighted, and the several effects worked out with scrupulous painstaking fidelity. It is worth your while, with your own eyes rather than with many words of mine, to search out on the original all these beautifully varied gradations. In many of his pictures one part is lighted from the sunlit street, and another from a closed court. Sometimes his figures stand in an open courtyard, whilst behind is a paved passage leading into the house. All his subjects are of the domestic Dutch life of the seventeenth century, but the arrangement in rooms, passages, courtyards, and enclosed gardens admitted of much variation. We never feel that the range of subjects is limited, for the light transforms each into a scene of that poetic beauty which it was Peter de Hoogh's great gift to discern, enjoy, and record.

The painting is delicate and finished, meant to be seen from near at hand. It is always the room that interests him, as much as the people in it. The painting of the window with its little coats of arms, transparent yet diffusing the light, is exquisitely done. A chair with the cushion upon it, just like that, occurs again and again in his pictures, the cushion being used as a welcome bit of colour in the scheme. Most of all, the floors, whether paved with stone as in this picture, or with brick as in the courtyards, are painted with the delightful precise care that the Van Eycks gave to their accessories. In Peter de Hoogh's vision of the world there is the same appreciation of the objects of daily use as was displayed by the fifteenth-century Flemish painters whenever their sacred subjects gave them opportunity. In the seventeenth century it was more congenial to the Flemish and Dutch temperament to paint their own country, and domestic scenes from their own lives, than pictures of devotion.

Other artists besides Peter de Hoogh painted people in their own houses. In the pictures of Terborch ladies in satin dresses play the spinet and the guitar. Jan Steen depicted peasants revelling on their holidays or in taverns. Peter de Hoogh was the painter of middle-class life, and discovered in its circumstances, likewise, abounding romance.

The Dutchman of the seventeenth century loved his house and his garden, and every inch of the country in which he lived, rescued as it had been from invasions by armies and the sea. Many painters never left Holland, and found beauty enough there to fill well-spent lives in painting its flatness beneath over-arching clear or clouded skies. Although the earlier Flemings had had a great love of landscape, they had not conceived it as a subject suitable for a whole picture, but only for a background. In the sixteenth century the figures gradually get smaller and less important, and towards the end of the century disappear. As the song says, 'a very different thing by far' is painting a landscape background and painting a whole

landscape picture. Before the end of the century Rubens painted some wonderful landscapes, and he was soon followed by a great number of very fine landscape painters in Holland. Cuyp was one of many.

In a Dutch landscape we cannot expect the rich colouring of Italy. The colouring of Holland is low toned, and tender gradations lead away to the low and level horizon. The canals are sluggish and grey, and the clouds often heavy and dark. We saw how the brilliant skies and pearly buildings of Venice made Venetian painters the gayest colourists of the world. So the Dutch painters took their sober scale of landscape colouring as it was dictated to them by the infinitely varied yet sombre loveliness of their own land. In the great flat expanses of field, intersected by canals and dotted with windmills, the red brick roof of a water-mill may look 'loud,' like an aggressive hat. But the shadows cast by the clouds change every moment, and in flat country where there is less to arrest the eye the changes of tone are more marked.

In an etching, Rembrandt could leave a piece of white paper for the spot of highest sunlight, and carry out all the gradations of tone in black and white, until he reached the spot of darkest shadow. A painted landscape he indicated in the same way by varying shades of dull brown. In all of them you seem to feel the interposition of the air between you and the distant horizon at which you are looking. What else is there? At each point in the picture the air modifies the distinctness with which you can see the objects. This consciousness of air in a picture of low horizon is a very difficult thing to describe and explain. We know when it is there and when it is not. It has to be seen, to be enjoyed, and recorded. Holbein painted Edward VI. standing, so to speak, in a vacuum. Every line of his face is sharply defined. In real life air softens all lines, so that even the edge of a nose in profile is not actually seen as a sharp outline. The figures in Richard II.'s picture stand in the most exhausted vacuum, but Hubert van Eyck had already begun to render the vision or illusion of air in his 'Three Maries.' In this respect he had learnt more than the early painters of the Italian Renaissance; but Raphael and the Venetians, especially Giorgione and Titian, sometimes bathed their figures in a luminous golden atmosphere with the sun shining through it.

The Dutch painters carried this still further, particularly in their pictures of interiors and landscapes. It is the atmosphere in the rooms that makes Peter de Hoogh's portrayal of interiors so wonderful. In our little picture the light coming through the window makes the air almost golden. When this painting of air and tone is set forth by the exquisite colour of Peter de Hoogh, you see this kind of Dutch achievement at its best. Cuyp's love of sunshine is rare among Dutch landscape painters. He suffuses his skies with a golden haze that bathes his kin and kine alike in evening light. In our picture you can feel the great height of the sky and the depth of the air between the foreground and the horizon. The rendering of space is excellent. But Cuyp has not been content with the features of his native Holland. He has put an imaginary mountain in the distance and a great hill in the foreground. It is certainly not a view

that Cuyp ever saw in Holland with his own eyes. He thought that the mountain's upright lines were good to break the flatness; and the finished composition, if beautiful, is its own excuse for being.

LANDSCAPE WITH CATTLE
From the picture by Cuyp, in the Dulwich Gallery

Rembrandt is an exception to all rules, but most of the Dutch painters did not allow themselves these excursions within their studios to foreign scenes. They faithfully depicted their own flat country as they saw it, and added neither hills nor mountains. But they varied the lighting to express their own moods. Ruysdael's sombre tone befits the man who struggled with poverty all his life, and died in a hospital penniless. Cuyp is always sunny. In his pictures, cattle browse at their ease, and shepherds lounge contented on the grass. He was a painter of portraits and of figure subjects as well as of landscapes, and his little groups of men and cattle are always beautifully drawn. Ruysdael, Hobbema, and many others were landscape painters only, and some had their figures put in by other artists. Often they did without them, but in the landscapes of Cuyp, cows generally occupy the prominent position. The black and white cow in our picture is a fine creature, and nothing could be more harmonious in colour than the brown cow and the brown jacket of the herdsman.

There were some painters in Holland in the seventeenth century who made animals their chief study. Theretofore it had been rare to introduce them into pictures, except as symbols, like the lion of St. Jerome, or where the story implied them; or in allegorical pictures, such as the 'Golden Age.' But at this later time animals had their share in the increased interest that was taken in the things of daily life, and they were painted for their handsome sakes, as Landseer painted them in England fifty years ago.

Thus the seventeenth century in Holland shows an enlargement in the scope of subjects for painting. Devotional pictures were becoming rare, but illustrations, sacred and secular, portraits, groups, interiors, and landscapes, were produced in great numbers. Dutch painters outnumbered those of Flanders, but among the latter were at least two of the highest eminence, Rubens and Van Dyck, and to these we will next direct our attention.

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CHAPTER XI

VAN DYCK

The great painter Rubens lived at Antwerp, a town about as near to Amsterdam as Dover is to London. Yet despite the proximity of Flanders and Holland, their religion, politics, social life, and art were very different in the seventeenth century, as we have already seen.

Rubens was a painter of the prosperous and ruling classes. He was employed by his own sovereign, by the King of Spain, by Marie de Médicis, Queen of France, and by Charles I. of England. His remarkable social and intellectual gifts caused him to be employed also as an ambassador, and he was sent on a diplomatic errand to Spain; but even then his leisure hours were occupied in copying the fine Titians in the King's palace.

One day he was noticed by a Spanish noble, who said to him, 'Does my Lord occupy his spare time in painting?' 'No,' said Rubens; 'the painter sometimes amuses himself with diplomacy.'

In his life as in his art he was exuberant. An absurd anecdote of the time is good enough to show that. Some people, who went to visit him in his studio at Antwerp, wrote afterwards that they found him hard at work at a picture, whilst at the same time he was dictating a letter, and some one else was reading aloud a Latin work. When the visitors arrived he answered all their questions without leaving off any of those three occupations! We must not all hope to match Rubens.

Rubens's great ceremonial paintings, containing numerous figures and commemorating historical scenes in honour of his Royal patrons, were executed by his own hands, or by the hands he taught and guided, with great skill and speed. He painted also beautiful portraits of his wife and family, and pictures of his own medieval castle, which he restored and inhabited during the last years of his life, with views of the country stretching out in all directions. He liked a comfortable life and comfortable-looking people. He painted his own wives as often as Rembrandt painted Saskia; both were plump enough to make our memories recur with pleasure to the slenderer figures preferred by Botticelli and the painters of his school.

To accomplish the great mass of historic, symbolic, and ceremonial painting that still crowds the walls of the galleries of Europe, Rubens needed many assistants and pupils, but only one of them, Van Dyck, rose to the highest rank as a painter.

He was a Fleming by birth, and worked in the studio at Antwerp for several years as an assistant of Rubens; then he went to Italy to learn from the great pictures of the Italian Renaissance, as so many Northern artists wished to do. It has been said that the works of Titian influenced his youthful mind the most. Van Dyck spent three years in Genoa, where he was employed by those foremost in its life to paint their portraits. Many of these superb canvases have been dispersed to enrich the galleries of both hemispheres, public and private; but the proud, handsome semblances of some of his sitters, dressed in rich velvet, pearls, and lace, look down upon us still from the bare walls of their once magnificent palaces, with that 'grand air' for which the eye and the brush of Van Dyck have long remained unrivalled.

When he returned to Flanders from Italy, he had attained a style of painting entirely his own and very different from that of his great master, Rubens. The William II of Orange picture is an excellent example of Van Dyck's work. The child is a prince: we know it as plainly as if Van Dyck had spoken the word before unveiling his canvas. His erect attitude, his dignified bearing, his perfect self-possession and ease, show that he has been trained in a high school of manners. But there is also something in the delicate oval of the face, the well-cut nose and mouth, and the graceful growth of the hair, that speak of refined breeding. Distinction is the key-note of the picture.

This little Prince had in his veins the blood of William the Silent, and became the father of our William III. Poor human nature is too easily envious, and some deny the reality, in fact, of the distinction, the grace, of Van Dyck's portrayed men and women. Nevertheless, Van Dyck's vision, guiding his brush, was as rare an endowment as envy is a common one, and has higher authority to show us what to look for, to see, and to enjoy.

Van Dyck was the first painter who taught people how they ought to look, to befit an admirer's view of their aristocratic rank. His portraits thus express the social position of the sitter as well as the individual character. Although this has been an aim of portrait-painters in modern times, when they have been painting people of rank, it was less usual in the seventeenth century.

There was hardly scope enough in Antwerp for two great painters such as Rubens and Van Dyck, so in 1632 Van Dyck left Flanders and settled permanently in England, as Court painter to Charles I. All his life Charles had been an enthusiastic collector of works of art. Born with a fine natural taste, he had improved it by study, until Rubens could say of him: 'The Prince of Wales is the best amateur of painting of all the princes in the world. He has demanded my portrait with such insistence that

he has overcome my modesty, although it does not seem to me fitting to send it to a Prince of his importance.'

WILLIAM II. OF ORANGE
From the picture by Van Dyck, in the Hermitage Gallery, Leningrad

Two of our pictures, the Richard II. diptych and the Edward VI. of Holbein, were in his collection, besides many we have mentioned, such as Holbein's 'Erasmus,' Raphael's cartoons, and Mantegna's 'Triumph of Cæsar.' Before Charles came to the throne he had gone to Spain to woo the daughter of Philip III. The magnificent Titians in the palace at Madrid extorted such admiration from the Prince that Philip felt it incumbent upon him as a host and a Spaniard to offer some of them to Charles. Charles sent his own painter to copy the rest. He kept agents all over Europe to buy for him, and spent thousands of pounds in salaries and presents to the artists at his Court. As in the time of Henry VIII., there were still no first-rate English painters. James I. had employed a Fleming, and an inferior Dutchman, whom Charles retained in his service for a time. Then he experimented with a second-rate Italian artist, who painted some ceilings which still exist at Hampton Court. Rubens was too much in demand at other Courts for Charles to have his exclusive service, but the courtly Van Dyck was a painter after his own heart. For the first time he had found an artist who satisfied his taste, and Van Dyck a Court in which he could paint distinction to his heart's content. Charles would have squandered money on him if he had then had it to squander. As it was, he paid him far less than he had paid his inferior predecessors, but Van Dyck continued to paint for him to the end, and by Heaven's mercy died himself before the crash came, which overthrew Charles and scattered his collection.

Between the years 1632 and 1642, Van Dyck painted a great number of portraits of the King. It is from these that we obtain our vivid idea of the first Charles's gentleness and refinement. He has a sad look, as though the world were too much for him and he had fallen upon evil days. We can see him year by year looking sadder, but Van Dyck makes the sadness only emphasize the distinction.

Queen Henrietta Maria was painted even more often than the King. She is always dressed in some bright shimmering satin; sometimes in yellow, like the sleeve of William II.'s dress, sometimes in the purest white. She looks very lovely in the pictures, but lovelier still are the groups of her children. Even James II. was once a bewitching little creature in frocks with a skull-cap on his head. His sister Mary, aged six, in a lace dress, with her hands folded in front of her, looks very good and grown-up. When she became older, though not even then really grown-up, she married the William of Orange of our picture. He came from Holland and stayed at the English Court, as a boy of twelve, and it was then that Van Dyck painted this portrait of him.

Later on, when they were married, Van Dyck painted them together, but William was older and looked a little less beautiful, and Mary had lost the charm of her babyhood. With all her royal dignity and solemnity, she is a perfect child in these pictures. Refined people, loving art, have grown so fond of the Van Dyck children, that often when they wish their own to look particularly bewitching at some festivity,

they dress them in the costumes of the little Mary and Elizabeth Stuart, and revive the skull-caps and the lace dresses for a fresh enjoyment.

Van Dyck's patrons in England, other than the King, were mostly noblemen and courtiers. They lived in the great houses, which had been built in many parts of the country during the reigns of Elizabeth and her successors. The rooms were spacious, with high walls that could well hold the large canvases of Van Dyck. Sometimes a special gallery was built to contain the family portraits, and Van Dyck received a commission to paint them all. Often, several copies of the same picture were ordered at one time to be sent as presents to friends and relations. Usually the artist painted but one himself; the rest were copies by his assistants.

Van Dyck's portraits were designed to suit great houses. In a small room, which a portrait by Holbein would have decorated nobly, a canvas by Van Dyck would have been overpowering. In spite of the fact that the expressions on the faces are often intimate and appealing, domesticity is not the mark of his art. In Van Dyck's picture of our 'heir of fame,' the white linen, the yellow satin, and the armour please us as befitting the lovely face. There is a glimmer of light on the armour, but you see how different is Van Dyck's treatment of it from Rembrandt's. Van Dyck painted it as an article of dress in due subordination to the face, not as an opportunity for reflecting light and becoming the most important thing in the picture.

We have seen how Rembrandt, Peter de Hoogh, Cuyp, Rubens, and Van Dyck were all contemporaries, born within an area of ground smaller far than England. Yet the range of their subjects was widely different, and each painter gave his individuality full play. The desires of the public were not stereotyped and fixed, as they had been when all alike wanted their religious aspirations expressed in art. The patrons of that epoch had various likings, as we have to-day, and the painter developed along the lines most congenial to himself. Unless he could make people like what he enjoyed painting, he could not make a living. If they had no eyes to learn to see, he might remain unappreciated, like Rembrandt, until long after his death. Yet Van Dyck's portraits were popular. People could scarcely help enjoying an art that showed them off to such advantage. Having found a style that suited him, he adhered to it consistently, thenceforward making but few experiments. This little picture before us is an admirable example of the gentle poetic grace and refinement always recalled to the memory by the name of Van Dyck. So long as men prize the aspect of distinction, which he was the first Northern painter to express in paint, Van Dyck's reputation will endure.

CHAPTER XII

VELASQUEZ

During the years in which Van Dyck was painting his beautiful portraits of the Royal Family of England, another painter, Velasquez, was immortalizing another Royal Family in the far-away country of Spain. Cut off by the great mountains of the Pyrenees from the rest of Europe, Spain did not rank among the foremost powers until after the discovery of America had brought wealth to her from the gold mines of Mexico and Peru. In the sixteenth century the King of Spain's dominions, actual or virtual, covered a great part of Western Europe, excepting England and France. Germany, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands, owned the sovereignty of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. His son was Philip II. of Spain, the husband of our Queen Mary of England, and his great-grandson was King Philip IV., the patron of Velasquez, as Charles I. was of Van Dyck.

It is the little son of Philip IV., Don Balthazar Carlos, whose portrait is before us—as manly and sturdy looking a little fellow as ever bestrode a pony. He was but six years old when Velasquez painted the picture here reproduced. Certainly he was not fettered and cramped and prevented from taking exercise like his little sisters. The princesses of Spain were dressed in wide skirts, spread out over hoops and hiding their feet, from the time they could walk. The tops of the dresses were as stiff as corselets, and one wonders how the little girls were able to move at all. As they grew older the hoops became wider and wider, until in one picture of a grown-up princess, the skirts are broader than the whole height of her body. Stringent Court etiquette forbade a princess to let her feet be seen, but so odd may such conventions be, that it was nevertheless thought correct for the Queen to ride on horseback astride.

It is from the canvases of Velasquez that we know the Spanish Royal Family and the aspect of the Court of Philip IV. as though we had lived there ourselves. The painter was born in the south of Spain in the same year as Van Dyck, and seven years earlier than Rembrandt. To paint the portrait of his sovereign was the ambition of the young artist. When his years were but twenty-four the opportunity arrived, and Philip was so pleased with the picture that he took the young man into his household, and said that no one else should ever be allowed to paint his portrait. Velasquez welcomed with gratified joy the prospect of that life-long proximity, although neither his

earnings nor his station at all matched the service he rendered to his sovereign. As the years went on he was paid a little better, but his days and hours were more and more taken up with duties at Court, and his salary was always in arrears. He could not even reserve his own private time for his art, but as he waxed higher in the estimation of the King, the supervision of Court ceremonies, entrusted to him as an honour, deprived him of leisure, and at last brought his life prematurely to a close.

From the time when Velasquez entered the service of the King, he painted exclusively for the Court. We have eight portraits by him of Philip IV., and five of the little Don Carlos, besides many others of the queens and princesses. We can follow the growth of his art in the portraits of Philip IV., as we can follow that of Rembrandt in portraits of himself. But while Rembrandt might make of the same person, himself, or another model, a dozen different people, so that it mattered little who the model was, Velasquez was concerned with a different problem. In the seventeenth century almost any good painter could draw his models correctly, but Velasquez reproduced the living aspect of a man as no one else had done. We have already spoken of the feeling of atmosphere that Cuyp and Peter de Hoogh were able to bring into their pictures. Velasquez, knowing little or nothing of the contemporary Dutchmen, worked at the same art problems all his life, and at last mastered the atmosphere problem completely, whether it was the air of a closed room in the dark palace of Philip, or the air of the open country, as in our picture. In this there is no bright light except upon the face of the little prince. It is dark and gloomy weather, but if on such a day you were to see the canvas in the open air it would almost seem part of the country itself, as Velasquez's picture of a room seems part of the gallery in which it hangs.

It was only by degrees that he attained this quality in his work. He had had the ordinary teaching of a painter in Spain, but the level of art there at the time was not so high as in Holland or Italy. Like Rembrandt he was to a great extent his own master. In his early years he painted pictures of middle-class life, in which each figure is truthfully depicted, as were the early heads in Rembrandt's 'Anatomy.' Like Rembrandt in his youth, he looked at each head separately and painted it as faithfully as he could. The higher art of composing into the unity of a group all its parts, and keeping their perfections within such limits as best co-operate in the transcendent perfection of the whole—this was the labour and the crown of both their lives. Velasquez's best and greatest groups are such a realized vision of life that they have remained the despair of artists to this day.

Velasquez came to Court in the year in which Charles I., as Prince of Wales, went to Madrid to woo the sister of Philip IV. He painted her portrait twice, and made an unfinished sketch of Charles, which has unfortunately been lost. Five years afterwards Rubens was a visitor at the Spanish Court on a diplomatic errand. The painters took a fancy to one another, and corresponded for the remainder of their lives. They must have talked long about their art, and the elder painter, Rubens, is

thought to have promoted in Velasquez a desire to see the great treasures of Italy. At all events we find that in the next year he has obtained permission and money from Philip to undertake the journey, which kept him away from Spain for two years.

There is an amusing page, in doggerel verse, which I remember to have read some years ago. I trust the translator will pardon the liberty I am taking in quoting it. It reports a perhaps imaginary conversation between Velasquez and an Italian painter in Rome. 'The Master' in this rhyme is Velasquez.

> The Master stiffly bowed his figure tall
> And said, 'For Raphael, to speak the truth,
> —I always was plain-spoken from my youth,—
> I cannot say I like his works at all.'
>
> 'Well,' said the other, 'if you can run down
> So great a man, I really cannot see
> What you can find to like in Italy;
> To him we all agree to give the crown.'
>
> Velasquez answered thus: 'I saw in Venice
> The true test of the good and beautiful;
> First, in my judgment, ever stands that school,
> And Titian first of all Italian men is.'

Velasquez in Rome was already a ripening artist, whose vision of the world was quite uncoloured and unshaped by the medieval tradition. Raphael's pictures with their superhumanly lovely saints, their unworldly feeling, and their supernaturally clear light, doubtless imparted pleasure, but not a sympathetic inspiration. Tintoret's immense creative power and the colours of Titian's painting which inspired Tintoret's ambition, as we remember—these were the effective influences Velasquez experienced in Italy. His purchases and his own later canvases afford that inference. On his return from Italy he painted a ceremonial picture as wall decoration for one of the palaces of Philip, and in it we can trace the influence of the great ceremonial paintings of the Venetians. The picture commemorates the surrender of Breda in North Brabant, when the famous General Spinola received its keys for Philip IV. It is far more than a series of separate figures. Two armies, officers and men, are grouped in one transaction, in one near and far landscape. It is a picture in which the foreground and the distances, with the lances of the soldiers and the smoke of battle, are as indispensable to the whole as are the central figures of the Dutchman in front handing the city keys to the courtly Spanish general.

Don Balthazar Carlos was born while Velasquez was in Italy. On his return he painted his first portrait of him at the age of two. The little prince is dressed in a richly-brocaded frock with a sash tied round his shoulder. His hair has only just

begun to grow, but he has the same look of determination upon his face that we see four years later in the equestrian portrait. A dwarf about his own height stands a step lower than he does, so as again to give him prominence. Another picture of Don Balthazar a little older is in the Wallace Collection in London.

Velasquez's power with his brush lay in depicting vividly a scene that he saw; thus in portraiture he was at his best. He knew how to pose his figures to perfection, so as to make the expression of their character a true pictorial subject. In our picture it is on high ground that the hoofs of the pony of Don Balthazar Carlos tread. So to raise the little Prince above the eye of the spectator was a good stroke, suggesting an importance in the gallant young rider. The boy's erect figure, too, firmly holding his baton as a king might hold a sceptre, and the well-stirruped foot, are all perfect posing. Velasquez does not give him distinction in the manner of Van Dyck, by delicate drawing and gentle grace, but in a sturdier fashion, with speed and pose and a fluttering sash in the wind. All the portraits of this lad are full of charm. He was heir to the throne, but died in boyhood.

Velasquez paid another visit to Italy, twenty years after his first, for the purpose of buying more pictures to adorn Philip's palaces. Again we find him in Venice, where he bought two Tintorets and a Veronese, and again he made a long stay in Rome, this time to paint the portrait of the Pope. When he returned to Spain in 1651 he had still nine years of work before him. There were portraits of Philip's new Queen to be painted—a young girl in a most uncomfortable dress—and portraits of her child, the Infanta Marguerita. Bewitching are the pictures of this little princess at the ages of three, of four, and of seven, with her fair hair tied in a bow at the side of her head, and voluminous skirts of pink and silver. But sweetest of all is the picture called 'The Maids of Honour' ('Les Meninas'), in which the princess, aged about six, is being posed for her portrait. She is petulant and tired, and two of her handmaidens are cajoling her to stand still. Her two dwarfs and a big dog have been brought to amuse her, and the King and Queen, reflected in a mirror at the end of the room, stand watching the scene. Velasquez himself, with his easel and brushes, is at the side, painting. The picture perpetuates for centuries a moment of palace life. In that transitory instant, Velasquez took his vivid impression of the scene, and has translated his impression into paint. Everything is simple and natural as can be. The ordinary light of day falls upon the princess, but does not penetrate to the ceiling of the lofty room, which is still in shadow. All seem to have come together haphazard without being fitted into the canvas. There is little detail, and the whole effect seems produced by the simplest means; yet in reality the skill involved is so great that artists to-day spend weeks copying the picture, in the endeavour to learn something of the secret of Velasquez.

DON BALTHAZAR CARLOS
From the picture by Velasquez, in the Prado Museum, Madrid

The best judges are among those who rank him highest, so that he is called pre-eminently 'the painter's painter.' It is impossible for any one but a painter to understand how he used paint. From near at hand it looks a smudge, but at the proper distance every stroke takes its right place. Such freedom was the result of years of careful painting of detail, and is not to be attained by any royal road. Velasquez seldom seems to have made preliminary drawings, but of that we cannot be sure. Certainly he had learned to conceive his vision as a whole, and we may fancy at least that he drew it so upon the canvas—altering the lines as he went—working at all the parts of the picture at once, keeping the due relation of part to part; not as if he finished one bit at a time, or thought of one part of a figure as distinct from the rest. To have drawn separate studies for legs and arms would have been foreign to his method of working.

The pictures painted in this his latest style are few, for the court duties heaped upon him left too little time. Maria Theresa, the sister of Don Balthazar Carlos, was engaged to be married to Louis XIV., King of France. The marriage took place on the border of France and Spain, and Velasquez was in charge of all the ceremonies. The Princess travelled with a cavalcade eighteen miles long, and we can imagine what work all the arrangements involved. The marriage over, the ever loyal Velasquez returned to Madrid, but he returned only to die.

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CHAPTER XIII

REYNOLDS AND THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Hitherto we have travelled far and wide in our search for typical examples of the beautiful in painting. We went from Flanders to Italy, from Italy to Germany, back to Holland, and thence to Spain. It is true that we began in England with our first picture, and that we have returned twice, once with Holbein, and again with Van Dyck, both foreign born and trained artists. We will finish with examples of truly native English art.

In the eighteenth century England for the first time gained a foremost place in painting, though the people of the day scarcely realized that it was so. Even the poet Gray, writing in 1763, could say:

> Why this nation has made no advance hitherto in painting and sculpture, it is hard to say.... You are generous enough to wish, and sanguine enough to foresee, that art shall one day flourish in England. I, too, much wish, but can hardly extend my hopes so far.

Yet in 1763 Reynolds was forty years of age and Gainsborough but four years younger. Hogarth was even sixty-six, and at work upon his last plate. Although, hitherto, the best painting in England had been done by foreign artists such as Holbein and Van Dyck, yet there had always been Englishmen of praiseworthy talent who had painted pleasing portraits. Hogarth carried this native tradition to a high point of excellence. He painted plain, good-natured-looking people in an unaffected and straightforward way. But he was a humourist in paint, and as great a student of human nature as he was of art. His insight into character and his great skill with the brush, combined with his sensitiveness to fun, make him in certain respects a unique painter. In the National Gallery there is a picture of the heads of his six servants in a double row. They might all be characters from Dickens, so vividly and sympathetically humorous is each.

In his engravings Hogarth satirised the lives of all classes of the society of his day. When we look at them we live again in eighteenth-century London, and walk in

streets known to fame though now destroyed, thronged with men and women, true to life.

As an artist, Hogarth occupies a position between the seventeenth-century Dutch painters of low life and the English painters that succeeded him, who expressed the ideals of a refined society. His portraits have something of the strength of Rembrandt's. His street and tavern scenes rival Jan Steen's; but behind the mere representation of brutality, vice, crime, and misery we perceive not merely a skilled craftsman but a moral being, whom contact with misery deeply stirs and the sight of wickedness moves to indignation.

After 1720 a succession of distinguished painters were born in England. Many of them first saw the light in obscure villages in the depths of the country. Reynolds came from Devonshire, Gainsborough from Suffolk, Romney from the Lake country.

The eighteenth century was a time when politicians and men of letters had the habit of gathering in the coffee-houses of London—forerunners of the clubs of to-day. Conversation was valued as one of life's best enjoyments, and the varied society of actors, authors, and politicians, in which it flourished best, could only be obtained in the town. To the most distinguished circle of that kind in London, our painter Reynolds belonged.

In the eighteenth century, society had also begun to divide its time in modern fashion between town and country. Many of the large country houses of to-day, and nearly all the landscape-gardened parks, belong to that date. Nevertheless it was a time of great artificiality of life. The ladies had no short country skirts, and none of the freedom to which we are accustomed. In London they wore long powdered curls and rouged, and in the country too they did not escape from the artificiality of fashion. Indeed, their great desire seems to have been to get away from everything natural and spontaneous. The artificial poetry of that time deals with the patch-boxes and powder-puffs of the fashionable dames of the town, and with nymphs and Dresden china shepherdesses in the country.

Even on Reynolds' canvases the desire to improve upon nature is apparent. In his young days he painted the local personages of Devonshire. Then he made a journey abroad and spent three years in Rome and Venice. On his return he settled in London, and the most distinguished men and women of the day and their children sat to him. It seems that he would have liked his lords and ladies to look as heroic or sublime as the heroes or gods of Michelangelo. Instead of painting them in the surroundings that belonged to them, as Holbein or Velasquez would have done, he dressed his ladies in what he called white 'drapery,' a voluminous material, neither silk, satin, woollen, nor cotton, and painted them sailing through the woods. The ladies themselves liked to look like nymphs, characterless and pretty, so the fashion of painting portraits in this way became common.

The pictures are pleasing to look at, although so artificial, and after all it was only full-length portraits of ladies that Reynolds treated in this way. They were a small part of his whole output. But he and Velasquez worked in a totally different spirit. Velasquez made the subject before him, however unpromising, striking because of its truth. Reynolds liked to change it on occasion into something quite different, for the sake of making a picture pretty. Nevertheless, his strength lay in straightforward portraiture, and in the rendering of character. His portraits of men, unlike those of women, are dignified, simple, and restrained. His art was one long development till blindness prevented him from working. Every year he attained more freedom and naturalness in his pose and developed more power in his use of colour.

Many would say that his loveliest achievements were portraits of children, yet he did not attain the same freedom in his child poses till late in life. You have all seen photographs, at any rate, of the 'Age of Innocence' and the 'Heads of Angels,' but this little picture of the Duke of Gloucester, nephew of George III., will not be so familiar. I wonder whether it reminds you of anything you know? It reminds me of Van Dyck. The little duke stands with an air of importance upon the hillside, which is raised above the eye of the spectator as Velasquez raised the ground beneath the pony of Don Balthazar Carlos. There is no mistake about the child being a simple English boy, with a nice chubby face and ordinary straight fair hair. But he is a prince and knows it. For the sake of having his picture painted, he poses with an air of conscious dignity beyond his years. He sweeps his cloak around him like any grown-up cavalier, and holds out a plumed hat and walking stick in a lordly fashion. The child is consciously acting the part of a grown-up person, which only emphasizes his childhood. But the air of refinement and distinction in the picture comes straight from Van Dyck. As you look at the portraits of the Duke of Gloucester and William II. of Orange side by side, it may puzzle you to say which is the more attractive. Van Dyck has painted the clothes in more detail. A century later Reynolds has learnt to paint with dash, though not with the mastery of Velasquez. The effect of the cloak of the little Duke, its shimmering shades of mauve and pink, is inimitable. It tones beautifully with the background, varying from dull green to brightest yellow. The background happens to be sky, but it might as well have been a curtain, as long as its bit of colour so set off the clothes of the little Duke.

When Reynolds painted children he delighted in making them act parts. Even in the 'Age of Innocence' the little girl is looking how very very innocent. He painted one picture of a small boy, Master Crewe, dressed to look like Henry VIII. in the style of Holbein. With broad shoulders and a rich dress, he stands on his sturdy legs quite the figure of Henry. But the face is one beam of boyish laughter, and on the top of the little replica of the body of the corpulent monarch the effect of the childish face is most entertaining.

THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER
From the picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds, in Trinity College, Cambridge

When Reynolds puts away his ideas of the grand style of Michelangelo to paint pictures such as these, he is entirely delightful. He sometimes painted Holy Families and classical subjects, but the more the spirit of medieval sacred art has sunk into us, the less can we admire modern versions of the old subjects. The sacred paintings of the Middle Ages owe some of their charm to the fact that they do not make upon us the impression of life. In Reynolds' Holy Families, the Mother and Child are painted with all the skill of a modern artist and look as human as his portraits of the Duchess of Devonshire and her baby. It is no longer possible to think of them as anything but portraits of the models whom Reynolds employed for his picture.

Another method that modern artists have sometimes adopted in painting sacred subjects, is to imitate the faulty drawing and incomplete representation of life which are present in the art of the Old Masters. But this conscious imitation of bygone ignorance beguiles no one who has once felt the charm of the painters before Raphael.

Reynolds' great contemporary, Gainsborough, has been called 'a child of nature.' He would have liked to live in the country always and paint landscapes. He did paint many of his native Suffolk, but in his day landscapes were unsaleable, so he was driven to the town and to portrait painting to make a living. Less than Reynolds a painter of character, Gainsborough reproduced the superficial expression of his sitters. But he had so natural an eye for grace and beauty, that his portraits always please. He did not attempt Reynolds' wide range of subjects or the same difficulties of pose. Of Reynolds he said: 'How various he is,' but his admiration did not make him stray from his natural path to attempt the variety of another. Reynolds, equally admiring, said of him: 'I cannot make out how he produces his effects.' Perhaps Gainsborough did not know either. He does seem to paint by instinct, and successive pictures became more pleasing. Buoyant in his life as in his art, his last words were: 'We are all going to Heaven, and Van Dyck is of the company.'

Another great contemporary painter was Romney, whose portraits of ladies are delightful. Figured as nymphs too, they are so buoyant with bright expressions and wayward locks, that one wishes he had depicted in their faces a soul.

All over England and Scotland portrait painters flourished at this time. There were so many English artists that in 1768 the Royal Academy was founded, with Sir Joshua Reynolds as its first president. It was to the students of the Royal Academy that he delivered his Discourses upon Art, setting forth the principles which he judged to be sound. He was an indefatigably hard worker until within two years of his death in 1792. All classes of men esteemed and regretted him, clouded though his intercourse with them had been by the deafness from which he suffered during the greater part of his life.

Goldsmith, the author of the *Vicar of Wakefield*, wrote this character 'epitaph' for him:

> Here Reynolds is laid, and to tell you my mind,
> He has not left a wiser or better behind.
> His pencil was striking, resistless and grand;
> His manners were gentle, complying and bland;
> Still born to improve us in every part,
> His pencil our faces, his manners our heart.
> To coxcombs averse, yet most civilly steering
> When they judged without skill, he was still hard of hearing.
> When they talked of their Raphaels, Correggios and stuff,
> He shifted his trumpet and only took snuff.
> By flattery unspoiled …

The end is missing, for while Goldsmith was versifying so feelingly about his friend, death overtook the writer, eighteen years before the subject of the epitaph.

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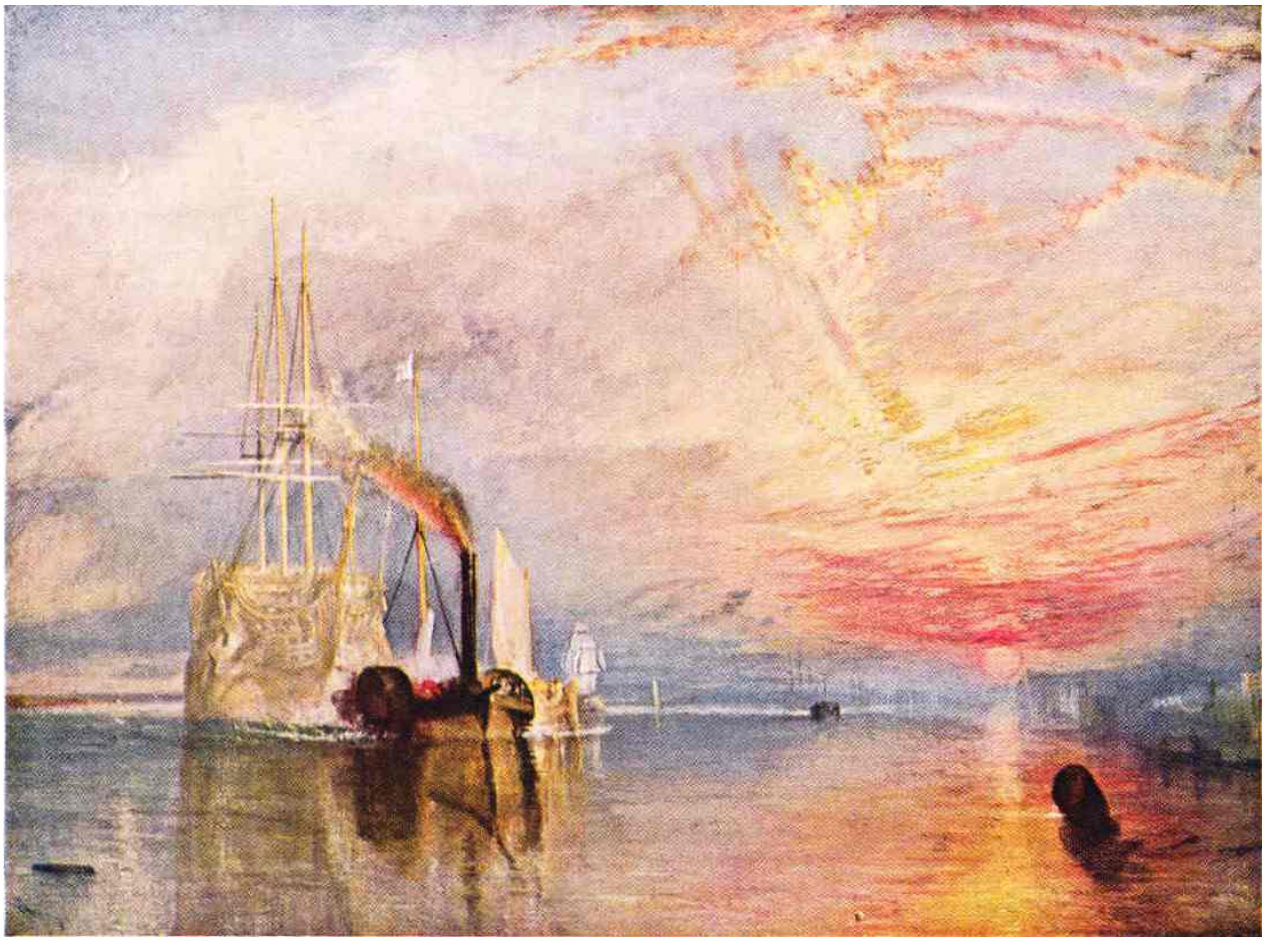
CHAPTER XIV

TURNER

I wonder which of you, if seeing this picture for the first time, will realize that you are looking at the old familiar Thames? It would seem rather to be some place unknown except in dreams, some phantasy of the human spirit that we ourselves could never hope to see. And yet, in fact, this is what Turner actually did see one evening as he was sailing down the Thames to Greenwich with a party of friends. Suddenly there loomed up before his eyes the great hull of the *Temeraire*, famous in the fight against the fleet of Napoleon at Trafalgar, and so full of memories of glorious battle, that it was always spoken of by sailors as the *Fighting Temeraire*. At last, its work over as a battleship, or even as a training-ship for cadets, dragged by a doughty little steam-tug, it was headed for its last resting-place in the Thames, to be broken up for old timber. As the *Temeraire* hove in sight through the mist, a fellow-painter said to Turner: 'Ah, what a subject for a picture!' and so indeed it proved. The veteran ship, for Turner, had a pathos like the passing of a veteran warrior to his grave.

Turner loved the sea, and was very sensitive to its associations with the toils and triumphs of mankind. Born beside the Thames, he grew up among boats and fraternized with sailors all his life. It was impossible for him to be the beholder of such a scene as the *Temeraire's* approach to her last moorings, save as a poet-painter; and stirred to the putting forth of all his powers, this *Fighting Temeraire* is his surpassing poem.

It was in 1775, while Reynolds was at the height of his fame, that Turner saw the light, born of obscure parents in an obscure house, but with a gift of vision that compelled him to the palette and the pencil his whole life long. Yet, when he was apprenticed to an architect to learn architectural drawing, he had to be dismissed after two periods of probation because of his absolute inability to learn the theory of perspective or even the elements of geometry. But the time was not far off when he was to become in his turn Professor of Perspective at the Royal Academy.



THE FIGHTING TÉMÉRAIRE
From the picture by Turner, in the National Gallery, London

The popular distaste, or unborn taste, for landscape, which had prevented Gainsborough from following his natural bent, was changing at last. The end of the eighteenth century saw the beginning of a return to nature in art as well as in poetry. Some artists in the eastern counties, older than Turner, were already spending their lives in the not too lucrative painting of landscape. These men took for their masters the seventeenth-century painters of Holland. Old Crome, so called to distinguish him from his son, founded his art upon that of Hobbema, and came so close to him in his early years that it is difficult to distinguish their pictures. In the works of this 'Norwich School' the wide horizons of the Dutch artists often occur. But there is a brighter colour, a fresher green, recalling England rather than Holland. Turner never felt the influence of the Dutch painters so strongly as these artists did. Like Gainsborough, and many another artist before him and since, Turner was to be dominated by the necessity of making a living. At the end of the century a demand arose for 'Topographical Collections,' of views of places, selected and arranged according to their neighbourhood. These were not necessarily fine works of art, but they were required to be faithful records of places. Topographical paintings,

drawings, and prints took the place now filled by the photograph and the postcard. Turner found employment enough making water-colour sketches to be engraved for such topographical publications. But sketches that might be mere hack-work became under his fingers magically lovely. We may follow him to many a corner of England, Wales, and Scotland, sketching architecture, mountain, moor, mists, and lakes. His earliest sketches are rather stiff and precise. But he developed with rapidity, and soon painted them in tones of blue and grey, so soft that the stars and the horizons merge into one lovely indefiniteness. Not till much later is there a touch of brighter colour in them such as fires the 'Temeraire,' but in all there is the same spirit of poetry. Turner longed to be a poet, although he could hardly write a correct sentence even in prose. But he was a poet in his outlook upon life; he seldom painted a scene exactly as he saw it, but transfused it by an imaginative touch into what on rare occasions, with perfect conjuncture of mist and weather, it might possibly become. He gave extra height to church spires, or made precipices steeper than they were, thus to render the impression of the place more explicit than by strict copying of the facts. Yet he could be minutely accurate in his rendering of all effects of sky, cloud, and atmosphere when he chose.

Other landscape painters have generally succeeded best with some particular aspect of nature, and have confined themselves to that. Cuyp excelled in painting the golden haze of sunshine, and Constable in effects of storm and rain. But Turner attempted all. Sunset, sunrise, moonlight, morning, sea, storm, sunshine: the whole pageantry of the sky. He never made a repetition of the golden hazes of Cuyp, who in his particular field stands alone; but it was a small field compared with that of Turner, who held the mirror up to Nature in her every mood.

Later in life, Turner travelled in France, Germany, and Italy. In Venice his eyes were gladdened by the gorgeous colours above her lagoons. Henceforth he makes his pictures blaze with hues scarcely dared by painter before. But so great was his previous mastery of the paler shades, that a few touches of brilliant colour could set his whole canvas aflame. Even in the 'Temeraire,' the sunset occupies less than half the picture. The cold colours of night have already fallen on the ship, and there remains but a touch of red from the smoke of the tug.

As Venice enriched his vision of colour, Rome stimulated him to paint new subjects suggested by ancient history and mythology. He knew little of Roman history or classical literature, yet enough to kindle his imagination; witness his 'Rise and Fall of the Carthaginian Empire' in the National Gallery. In these the figures are of no importance. The pictures still are landscapes, but freed from the necessity of being like any particular place. In work such as this, Turner had but one predecessor, the French Claude Lorraine. While the Dutchmen of the seventeenth century were painting their own country beautifully, Claude was living in Rome, creating imaginary landscapes. He called his pictures by the names of Scriptural incidents, and placed figures in the foreground as small and unessential as those of Turner. These classical

landscapes, with their palaces and great flights of steps leading down to some river's edge, and the sea in the distance covered with boats carrying fantastic sails, never for a moment make the impression of reality. But they are beautiful compositions, designed to please the eye and stimulate the fancy, and are even attractive by virtue of their novel aloofness from the actual world.

Turner set himself to rival Claude in his ideal landscapes, founded upon the stories of the ancient world. In his picture of 'Dido building Carthage,' he painted imaginary palaces, rivers, and stately ships, in the same cool colouring as Claude, and bequeathed his picture to the National Gallery, on condition that it should hang for ever between two pictures by Claude to challenge their superiority. Opinions are divided as to the rank of Turner's 'Carthage,' so when you go to the National Gallery, you must look at them both and prepare to form a preference.

Turner was incited to this rivalry with Claude by the popularity that painter enjoyed among English collectors of the day, who were less eager to buy Turner's great oil-paintings than those of his predecessor. Incidentally this rivalry was the origin of the great series of etchings executed by or for him, known as *The Book of Studies (Liber Studiorum)*. This book was suggested by Claude's *Libri di Verità*, six volumes of his own drawings (of pictures he himself had painted and sold) made in order to identify his own, and detect spurious, productions. But Turner's book was designed to show his power in the whole range of landscape art. The drawings were carefully finished productions, work by which he was willing to be judged, and many of them he etched with his own hands. His favourite haunts, the abbeys of Scotland and Yorkshire, the harbours of Kent, the mountains of Switzerland, the lochs of Scotland, and the River Wye, he chose as illustrating his best power over architecture, sea, mountain, and river. He repeated several of the same subjects later in oils, such as the pearly hazy 'Norham Castle' in the Tate Gallery.

Turner painted still another kind of imaginary landscape, not in rivalry with any one, but to please himself. Of course you all know the story of Ulysses and the one-eyed giant, Polyphemus, in the *Odyssey* of Homer? Turner chose for his picture the moment when Ulysses has escaped from the clutches of Polyphemus, and sailing away in his boat, taunts the giant, who stands by the water's edge, cursing Ulysses and bemoaning the loss of his sight. Turner has used this mythical scene as an opportunity for creating stupendous rocks never seen by a pair of mortal eyes, and a galley worthy of heroes or gods. The picture is the purest phantasy, even more like a fairy-tale than the story it illustrates. He has made the whole scene burn in the red light of a flaming sunrise, redder by far than the sunset of the old 'Temeraire.'

The story is told of a gentleman who, looking at a picture of Turner's, said to him, 'I never saw a sunset like that.' 'No, but don't you wish you could?' replied Turner. That is what we feel about the sunrise in the picture of Ulysses and Polyphemus. Next to it in the National Gallery hangs another picture called 'Rain, Steam, and

Speed'—the Great Western Railway. From the realm of the mythical, this takes us back to the class of scenes of which the 'Fighting Temeraire' is one, actually beheld by Turner, but magically transfigured by his brush. A train is coming towards us over a bridge, prosaic subject enough, especially in 1844, when railways were supposed to be ruining the aspect of the country and were hated by beauty-loving people. But Turner saw romance in the swift passage of a train, and painted a picture in which smoke and rain, cloud and sunset, river and bridge, boats and trees, are all fused in a mist, pearly and golden as well as smutty and grey. When you look at it, you must stand away and look long, till gradually the vision of Turner shapes itself before your eyes and the scene as he beheld it lives again for you.

We saw how Venice opened his eyes to flaming colour. In his pictures of Venice, her magic beauty is revealed by a delicate sympathy, that re-creates the fairy city in her day of glory. Never tired of painting her in all her aspects, at morning, at even, in pomp, and at peace, a sight of his pictures is still the best substitute for a visit to the city itself.

Other artists have interpreted scenery beautifully, and a few have painted ideal landscapes, but who besides Turner has ever united such diversities of power? He continued to paint water-colour sketches to the end of his life, for these were appreciated by a public that did not understand, and neglected to buy, his oil-paintings. He sketched throughout France and Switzerland for various publications as he had sketched in England. Time has not damaged these drawings, as it has the pictures in oil, for to the end of his life Turner sometimes used bad materials. Even the sky of the 'Fighting Temeraire' has faded considerably since it was painted, and others of his oil-pictures are mere shadows of their former selves. It is pathetic to look upon the wreck of work not a century old and to wonder how much of it will be preserved for future generations.

Turner himself deemed the 'Temeraire' one of his best pictures, and from the beginning intended to bequeath it to the National Gallery, refusing to sell it for any price whatever.

> There's a far bell ringing,
> At the setting of the sun,
> And a phantom voice is singing
> Of the great days done.
> There's a far bell ringing,
> And a phantom voice is singing
> Of renown for ever clinging
> To the great days done.
>
> Now the sunset breezes shiver,
> *Temeraire! Temeraire!*

And she's fading down the river,
Temeraire! Temeraire!
Now the sunset breezes shiver,
And she's fading down the river,
But in England's song for ever
She's the '*Fighting Temeraire*.'[4]

[Footnote 4: *The Fighting Temeraire*. Henry Newbolt.]

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CHAPTER XV

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Since we began our voyagings together among the visionary worlds of the great painters, five hundred and thirty years ago, at the accession of King Richard II., we have journeyed far and wide, trudging from the rock where Cimabue found the boy Giotto drawing his sheep's likeness. The battleship of Turner has now brought us to the mid-nineteenth century, a time within the memories of living men, and still our journey is not ended.

Hitherto we have been guided in our general preference for certain artists and certain pictures by the concurring opinion of the best judges of many successive generations. But while we are looking at modern paintings, we cannot say, as some one did, that in our opinion, 'which is the correct one,' such and such a picture is worthy to rank with Titian. The taste of one age is not the taste of another. Who can surely pronounce the consensus of opinion to-day? Who can guess if it will concur with that of future decades—of future centuries? We can but hope that learning to see and enjoy the recognized masterpieces of the past will teach us what to like best among the masterpieces of the present.

A great love of the Old Masters inspired the work of a group of young artists, who, about the year 1850, banded themselves together into a society which they called the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The title indicates their aim, which was to draw the inspiration of their art from the fifteenth-century painters of Italy. The sweetness of feeling in a picture such as Botticelli's 'Nativity,' the delicacy of workmanship and beautiful painting of detail in Antonello's 'St. Jerome' and other pictures of that date, had an irresistible fascination for them. They fancied and felt that these artists had attained to the highest of which art was capable, so that the best could only again be produced by a faithful study of their methods. The aims of the Brotherhood were not imitation of the artists but of the methods of the past. They held that every painted object, and every painted figure should be as true as it could be made to the object as it actually existed, rather than to the effect produced upon the eye, seeing it in conjunction with other objects.

These men heralded a widespread medieval revival, but all the study in the world could not make them paint like born artists of the fifteenth century. Yet there are those who think that much of the spirit of beauty, which had dwelt in the soul of Botticelli and his contemporaries, was born again in Rossetti and Burne-Jones. Their feeling for beauty of form and purity of colour, and their aloofness from the modern world, impart to their work an atmosphere that may remind us of the fifteenth century, though the fifteenth century could never have produced it.

Rossetti and Burne-Jones, indeed, never formally joined the Brotherhood, though they were influenced by its ideals and pursued the same strict fidelity to nature in all the accessories of a picture. Millais and Holman Hunt, original members of the Brotherhood, painted men and women of the mid-Victorian epoch with every detail of their peaked bonnets and plaid shawls, and were comparatively indifferent to beauty of form and face. But Rossetti and Burne-Jones created a type of ideal beauty which they employed on their canvases with persistent repetition. Burne-Jones founded his type upon the angels of Botticelli, and his drapery is like that of the ring of dancers in the sky in our picture of the 'Nativity.' You are probably familiar with some of his pictures and perhaps have felt the spell of his pure gem-like colouring and pale, haunting faces. It was the people of their minds' eye who sat beside their easels. Rossetti lived and worked in the romantic mood of a Giorgione, but instead of expressing the atmosphere of his fairy city of Venice, he created one as far as possible removed from his own mid-Victorian surroundings. His imaginary world was peopled by women with pale faces and luxuriant auburn hair, pondering upon the mysteries of the universe. Like Rossetti's 'Blessed Damozel,' they look out from the gold bar of heaven with eyes from which the wonder is not yet gone.

One of the best Pre-Raphaelite landscapes is the 'Strayed Sheep' of Holman Hunt. The sheep are wandering over a grass hillside of the vividest green, shot with spring flowers, and every sheep is painted with the detail of the central sheep in Hubert van Eyck's 'Adoration of the Lamb.' The colouring is almost as bright and jewel-like as that of the fifteenth-century painters, for one of the theories of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was that grass should be painted as green as the single blade—not the colour of the whole field seen immersed in light and atmosphere, which can make green grass seem gray or even blue.

In Brett's 'Val d'Aosta,' another Pre-Raphaelite landscape, we look from a hill upon a great expanse of valley with mountains rising behind. Every field of corn and every grassy meadow is outlined as clearly as it would be upon a map. Every stick can be counted in the fences between the fields and every tree in the hedge-rows. When we look at the picture we involuntarily wander over the face of the country. There is no taking in the view at a glance; we must walk through every field and along every path.

After seeing these Pre-Raphaelite landscapes, let us imagine ourselves straightway turning to one of the numerous scenes by Whistler of the Thames at twilight, with its glimmering lights and ghostly shapes of bridges and hulks of steamers. Nothing is outlined, nothing is clearly defined, but the mystery of London's river is caught and pictured for ever. Let us look, too, at his 'Valparaiso,' bathed in a brilliant South American sunshine, where all is pearly and radiant with southern light. Even here the impression is not given by the power of the sun revealing every detail. There are few touches, but like Velasquez, he has made every touch tell.

As the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood kindled their inspiration by the vision of the fifteenth-century painters of Italy, so Whistler and many other modern artists have turned to Velasquez for guidance. Till the last half of the last century his name had been almost forgotten outside Spain. Now, among the modern 'impressionists' so-called, he is perhaps more studied than any other painter. When we were looking at the pictures of this great man, we saw how he and Rembrandt were among the earliest to learn the value of subordinating detail in the parts to the better general effect of the whole, so as to present no more than the eye could grasp in a comprehensive glance. Every tree and stick in Brett's 'Val d'Aosta' is truthfully painted, but the picture as a whole does not give the spectator the impression of truth, for the simple reason that the eye can never see at once what Brett has tried to make it see. All the wonderfully veracious detail in the work of the Pre-Raphaelite does not give the impression of life. Men like Holman Hunt, on the one hand, and on the other hand Whistler, living and working at the same time, exhibiting their works in the same galleries, differ even more in their ideals than Velasquez differed from the fifteenth-century painters of Italy.

Facts such as these make the study of modern art difficult. Before the nineteenth century, pictures of the same date in the same country were painted in approximately the same style. But during the last fifty years many styles have reigned together. At one and the same time painters have been inspired by the Greek and Roman sculptors, by Botticelli, Mantegna, Titian, Tintoret, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Reynolds, and Turner, and the work of each is, notwithstanding, unmistakably nineteenth century, and could never have been produced at any other date. Every artist finds a problem of his own to solve, and attacks it in his own way. When Whistler painted a portrait he endeavoured to express character in the general aspect of the figure, rather than in the face. The picture of his mother is a wonderful expression of the sweetness and peace of old age, given by the severe lines of her black dress and the simplicity and nobility of her pose.

The great painter Watts, who by the face chiefly sought to express the man, never painted a full-length figure portrait. His long life, covering nearly the whole of the century, enabled him to portray many of the foremost men of the age—statesmen, poets, musicians, and men of letters. In his portrait gallery their fine spirits still meet one another face to face. But his portraits, in and through likenesses of the men, are

made to express the essence of that particular art of which the man was a spokesman. In his portrait of Tennyson, the bard with his laurel wreath is less Tennyson the man, if one may say so, than Tennyson the poet. The picture might be called 'poetry,' as that of Joachim could be called 'music,' for the violinist with his dreamy beautiful face, playing his heart out, looks the soul of music's self.

Watts was never a Pre-Raphaelite, clothing anew his dreams of medieval beauty; nor a seeker after the glories of Greece and Rome, like Leighton and Alma Tadema; nor a student of the instant's impression, like Whistler. To penetrate beneath the seen to the unseen was the aim of his art. He wrestled to express thoughts in paint that seem inexpressible. When we go to the Tate Gallery in London, to the room filled with most precious works of Watts, we feel almost overawed by the loftiness of his ideas, though they may seem to strain the last resources of the painter's art. One of them is a picture of 'Chaos' before the creation of the world. Half-formed men and women struggle from the earth to force themselves into life, as the half-wrought statues of Michelangelo from the marble that confines them. Near by is a picture of the 'All-pervading,' the spirit of good that penetrates the world, symbolized as a woman gazing long into a globe held upon her knee. Opposite is the 'Dweller in the Innermost,' with deep, unsearchable eyes. These are pictures that constrain thought rather than charm the eye. When the thought is less obscure, it is better suited to pictorial utterance, and Watts sometimes painted pictures as simple as these are difficult.

There is nothing obscure in our frontispiece picture of 'Red Ridinghood.' It sets before us a child's version and vision of a child's fable that is imperishable, and as such makes an immediate appeal to the eye. She is not acting a part or posing as a princess, but is simply a cowering little girl, frightened at the wolf and eager to protect her basket. In her freshness and simplicity, a cottage maiden with anxious blue eyes, most innocent and childish of children, she need not shun proximity to Richard II., Edward VI., William of Orange, Don Balthazar Carlos, and the Duke of Gloucester.

And thus we conclude our procession of royal children with a child of the people. Beginning with Richard II., a portrait of a king rather than a child, we end with a picture in which childhood merely, without the gift of distinction or the glamour of royalty, suffices to charm a great painter's eye and inspire his thought. With the sweetness and grace of modern childhood filling our eyes, may we not well close this children's book?

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